



Switchfoot
Thrice
Anthrax
A Plea For Purging
We Came As Romans
Oh, Sleeper
The Violet Burning
Family Force 5 poster

THE HARD MUSIC MAGAZINE



THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA



October, November, December 2011 • Issue #150
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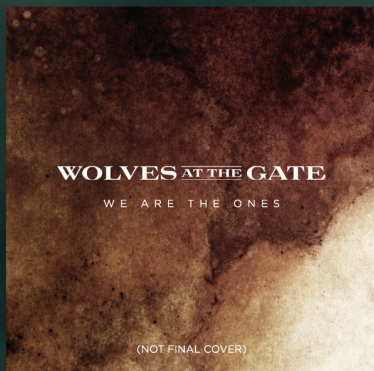
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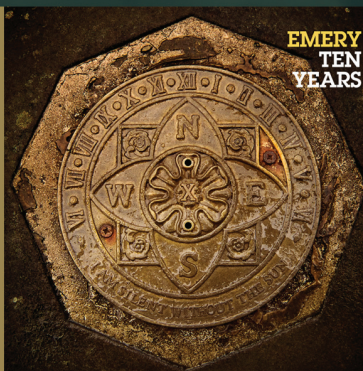
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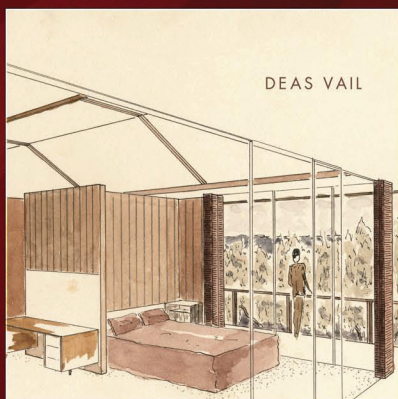
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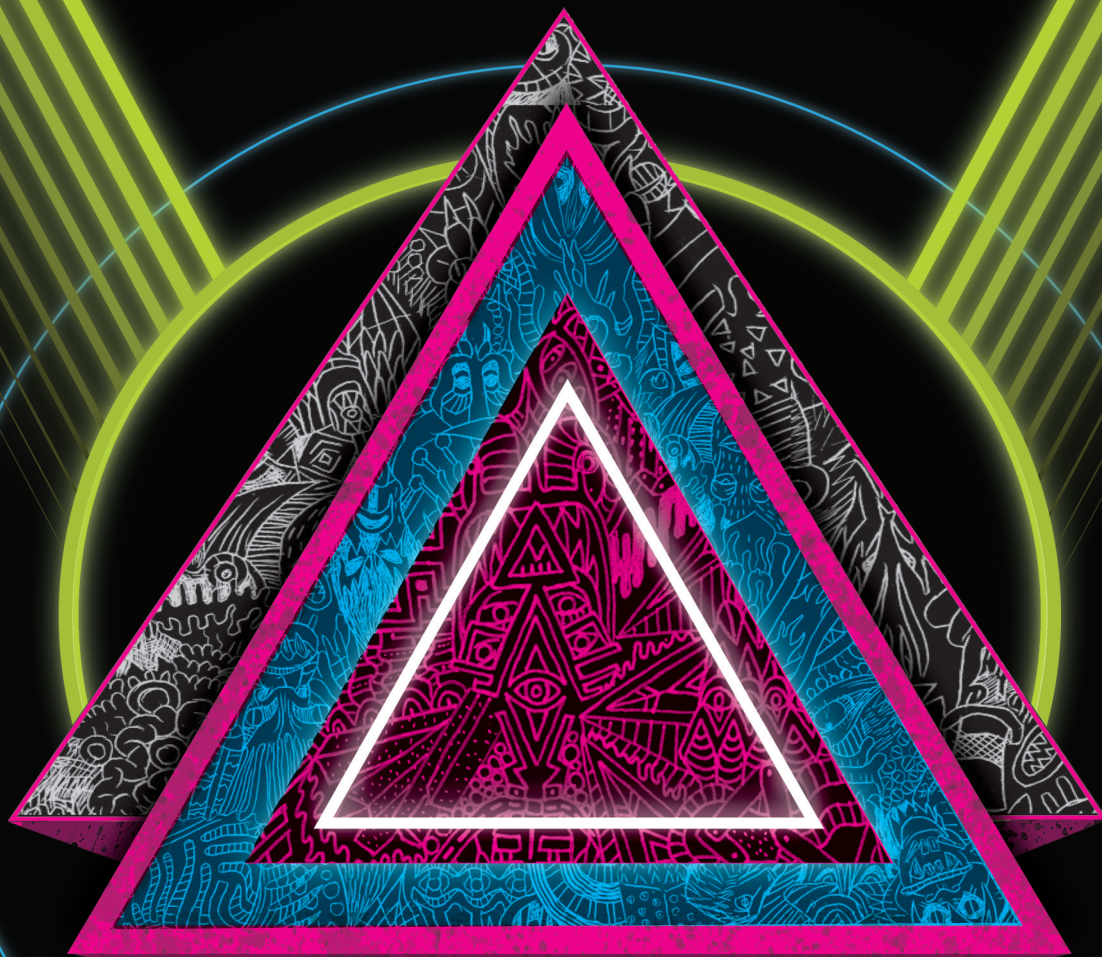
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— Ralph Winter, Producer (*X-Men*, *Wolverine*)

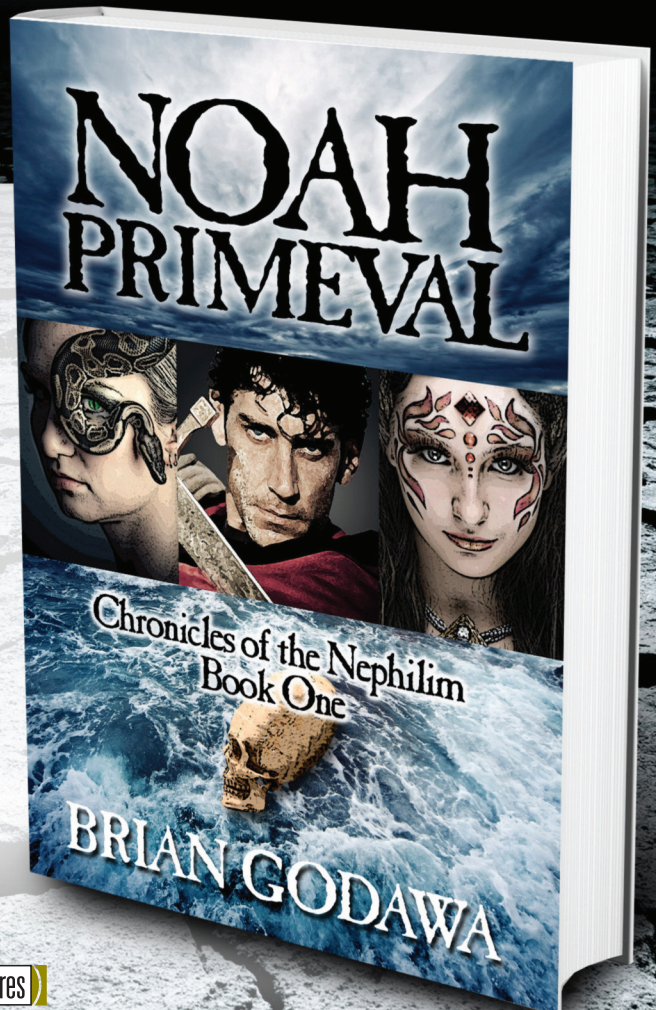
In an ancient world of darkness, fallen angels breed giants and enslave mankind. Noah has been prophesied to save humanity from the coming destruction of this evil. But Noah's wife and son are captives of these dark forces – and he's not going anywhere without them.

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From the editor

Doug Van Pelt

GOODBYE TO BRO-MANCE

I don't really want to say this, but HM Magazine is going to have to go out of print – at least for awhile. We are going to shift our (current) focus from print+digital to digital and nothing but the digital. We will honor all the regular subscriptions that are out there. In fact, we will triple their longevity as it translates into accessing the digital with a username and password. That means your one-year normal (print) subscription will extend to three years of digital. I hope that those of you who have had a normal subscription realize that you have had access to the digi-edition as well. If you haven't bothered to check it out online in addition to your print version, there's no time like the present to familiarize yourself with the browser and how it works with your computer, notebook or tablet. It's pretty simple, and it's pretty cool. Those of you who were already subscribed via the digital-only editions; well, you were ahead of the game, and you will keep on rolling with your current subscription. The various app versions have rolled out over multiple platforms (iPhone, Android, with more to come), and these will be accessible on a per-issue and separate basis. And speaking of apps, we are giving away an iPad 2 on 11-1-11. *Enter to win one. It'll be a great way to read future editions of HM Magazine.

Yeah, I have to admit, this feels like a defeat for me. I'm okay, though. I can hold my head up, because I know I gave it my all to keep this magazine on the printed page. I've placed this publication in the Lord's very capable hands time and time again. After going without a regular salary for over a year and incurring a mountain of debt for this business, I drew a line in the sand with this deadline. I figured what amount we could pull in with advertising sales and still maintain a profitable business. I set that reasonable amount as both a goal and a litmus test and also sort of a fleece before the Lord. I had confidence that, whichever way this turned out, that God was in control, and He'd guide and direct my paths. Even though HM has been like my "baby," I've had to give it back to God and watch it change before our eyes.

If the digi-edition of HM Magazine prospers, I would very much like to bring the print version back. I'm holding out hope that this will happen someday down the road, although I'm making no promises, and I'm certainly not holding my breath. To find out if/when this will happen, by all means, read my blog and/or the free weekly HM enewsletter for announcements. Thanks for reading.

* Enter to win an iPad 2 at: <http://tinyurl.com/HMiPad>

SPINNING AT HM NOW

ALICE COOPER	<i>Welcome to my Nightmare 2</i>	It's great to have the gothic shock rocker back.
SWITCHFOOT	<i>Vice Verses</i>	Great songs that easily get personal.
MUTEMATH	<i>Odd Soul</i>	I like it better than Armistice.
THE VIOLET BURNING	<i>The Story of Our Lives</i>	A huge # of tunes w/ song after great song.
LAWRENCE BISHOP	<i>Clear</i>	Solid Southern rock/boogie. "Harleys in Heaven."
SOUNDS UNDER RADIO	<i>Where My Communist...</i>	I forgot how good this EMI band was.
TERRAPHOBIA	<i>Evolution</i>	Michael Jellinic's now-solo death metal band.

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INTERMISSION

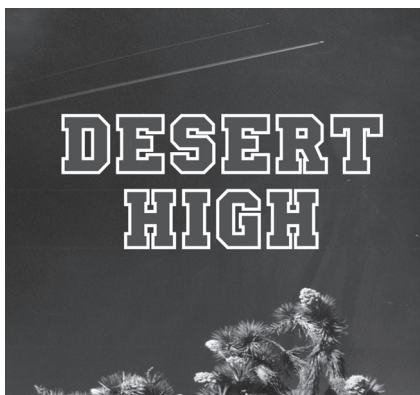
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Letters to the Editor

HM



WHAT A NOVEL IDEA!

I was browsing through Kickstarter and saw the purple & white and knew immediately what school you were talking about. Congrats on your book and your Kickstarter.com funding. I just pledged \$20 and look forward to getting your book. I know how much work goes into writing and how hard it is. Your book sounds interesting – time travel for a second chance at the “big game” is a great idea. Although quite a different story, I love the movie *Best of Times* with Robin Williams and Kurt Russell, which coincidentally took place in Bakersfield.

–Tony Ashley, via email

Ed – No way! We both lived on the same street at Edwards AFB! I hope you enjoy reading the book as much as I enjoyed writing it. I, too, enjoyed that Best of Times movie. I saw it while writing the book and marveled at the parallel of high school football, the past and Kern County, CA. Thanks for helping make the Kickstarter campaign a success. Here's to the future of HM Press. The next book planned is Rock Stars on God, Volume 2, a collection of interviews from this magazine.

A SAD FACE IS GOOD FORTHE...

I hope something can work out. HM is such an important outlet for Christian bands. If it goes out of print, I know it will be a sad day for a lot of people, regardless of if it maintains an online presence.

–Ashley Di Buduo, via email

Ed – Don't make me cry!

ADVICE FOR THE DIGI-EDITION

Get as much advertising as possible. Pay your writers as much as possible. Work with the people who work with you: if that means special treatment for advertisers, DO IT. Publicize your product any way possible. The most important thing is to make fans realize that, although you may not be in print anymore, you're alive and well online. Good luck to you.

–Mike G, via email

Ed – Hmmm. Thanks for the great advice!

PHASE SHIFTING

Thanks Doug! I was a subscriber back in the late '90s and early 2000s. Then I got away from the music scene for about 7 or 8 years and now that I'm a youth pastor I'm back involved with music now. Thanks for being such a great way to get back into good music!

–Ryan Roach, via email

Ed – You remind me of what Plea's Andy talks about in this issue, as well as my “Ugly Truth...” article from a few years back. Why do you think so many people move away from hard music after their mid-twenties? I understand “settling down,” but I can't imagine not enjoying hard music anymore. Maybe it's just me. Anyway, I'm glad you're jammin' again. Glad HM can help.

HELP! I NEED SOMEBODY...

I saw your post on Facebook, and I'm sad to hear that HM is having so many problems. I've done what I can to help out. I'm an administrator on several bands' facebook pages, so I've posted on them asking people to support HM. I've passed on the info to a few other people/bands as well. I'll be praying for you, and I hope that everything works out! My brother used to read HM back in the '90s and I read it now. I would hate to see it go under.

–lan DeVaney, via email

Ed – Thanks! That's some real practical help – both the posts and the prayers! Seriously. As we move to an all-digital format, it'll be more important than ever to spread the news online.

...THE HALLWAY IS HELL

Bro, great to talk with you today and sad to hear about HM, but it sounds like God has some other plans in store for you moving forward. Again, we pray that God provides loud and clear (Stryper reference) guidance for you and the family and opens up the right door that you can in some way continue to be the lone but solid voice for Christian music. Please let us know how things go & how we can be of support.

–Rob Shevlot, via email

Ed – Thanks, bro. It's pretty awesome to have prayerful support and encouragement like that.

CRITICISM CAN BE GOOD?

Memnoir – Pick of the Litter?? You must not have had much good to choose from. This is mediocre song writing at best. I think this is the kind of poor quality art that Mr. Crabb writes about in your articles. I commend this artist's effort, but I don't see why you guys are promoting this as being outstanding.

–Ben L, via email

Ed – Hmmm, maybe like the old Dave Mason song, I guess we just disagree...?

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SCRIPTURE

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit He prunes so that it will be even more fruitful ... Remain in Me, and I will remain in you.” (John 15:1-2,4)

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HARDNEWS

Quick & concise

MIKE HERRERA STARTS NEW CO. *LEGIONNAIRE NEW CLOTHING LINE*

Herrera and Joe Moxley run Legionnaire Apparel. "We met at an MXPX show in Medford, OR," explains the MxPx/Tumbledown frontman, "and ultimately joined forces to create our own clothing line. Moxley opened up shop in his garage and started hand-screening designs that he and I created ourselves. The goal is to work together to offer quality, unique clothing at a reasonable price and to dress the masses, one piece at a time." If the company had a motto, Herrera says it would be: "Faith, Family, Friends. Legionnaire is a big family. We take care of each other." They recently opened up a retail kiosk at the Medford Mall, which is going well. Herrera's MxPx gig is not sitting idle, either, with a band documentary DVD this fall and a new studio album coming in early 2012.



CREATIONS RELEASE NEW ALBUM *THE GOSPEL DROPS ON RITE OF PASSAGE*

Sydney, Australia's metalcore band Creations have signed with the new label imprint of Mediaskare Records, Rite of Passage. Their latest full-length, *The Gospel*, released on August 30th. "Possessed of filthy-toned metallic riffage, furious double kick drumming and brutal but discernable vocals," the label describes, "Creations bring a Pantera and Strife influence into Christian metal-core." Speaking on the new full-length guitarist James Thorpe says, "This album is a lot faster, darker and heavier than our previous material. The album title, *The Gospel* refers to the good news of reconciliation to God through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ in dying for our sins. The album is split into 2 parts; firstly what the Gospel is, and secondly what the Gospel is not." Creations is made up of Thorpe, Michael Foss (vocals), Jonny Blackwell (bass), and Blair Gowan (drums).



Stand Your Ground signs to Rite of Passage

The band's new album, *Despondenseas* (with the last four letters changed to play on the nautical theme), dropped on August 30th. In between their tours with Sovereign Strength and It Prevails, the band locked themselves in Warrior Sound Studios in Chapel Hill, NC, with producer Mitchell Marlow (who has played in bands like Filter, He Is Legend and Classic Case). Though they've previously recorded demos and an EP to shop to labels with, *Despondenseas* is Stand Your Ground's first album with Mediaskare Records. Daniel relates "We are pumped about being on Mediaskare Records. At first, we were signed to another label, but they couldn't properly release the album and had to drop us. What started off as a huge bummer turned out to be a blessing in disguise. Mediaskare are really excited about us and our music, and we're pumped to be received along bands like Bury Your Dead and The Ghost Inside," Daniels explained. The band will announce fall touring plans shortly.

News bullets

Impending Doom will enter the studio this week to work on their upcoming yet-to-be-titled new record. The band will begin work with producer Andreas Magnusson with the all mighty Machine for mixing. "After months of preparation the time has finally come to start production on our next full-length! Without going into the cliché of trying to explain how this is our 'heaviest' or 'most mature' material, I will spare the insincere rant and just say that this is by far OUR favorite material and we can't wait to share it with you guys," says guitarist **Cory Johnson**.

While we wait for a new **U2** album to come out next year, the band is releasing *20 Years of Achtung Baby: Anniversary Edition* – with previously unreleased songs and new documentary.

Mortification is celebrating the 20th anniversary of their ground-breaking *Scrolls of the Megilloth* grindcore album by releasing an EP with six new songs titled *Scribe Of The Pentateuch*.

The Chariot are releasing a vinyl LP version of *Long Live*. The band is on tour this fall with **Underoath**, **Comeback Kid** and **This is Hell**.

In the Midst of Lions is heading out on the Thrash & Burn Tour in November with **Winds of Plague**, **Chelsea Grin** and **As Blood Runs Black**.

Strike First Records have signed a melodic hardcore band from Johnstown, PA, called **We The Gathered**. Look for their debut album, *Believer*, on October 25th.

TDWP's *Dead Throne* debuted in the top 10 of the *Billboard Top 200 Albums* chart. The band will start a 36-date tour of North America in November.

Hundredth is touring with **Trapped Under Ice**, **Backtrack**, **Betrayal** and **Take Offense**.

Owl City will be back in the US for the third leg of its *All Things Bright & Beautiful Tour*.

Switchfoot is touring on a co-headlining tour with **Anberlin**.



Industry Profile: Kevin Lyman

JUST IN CASE YOU DON'T RECOGNIZE HIS NAME, KEVIN LYMAN IS THE FOUNDER OF THE WILDLY SUCCESSFUL AND MASSIVE ANNUAL SUMMER PACKAGE KNOWN AS *WARPED TOUR*.

BY TONY D BRYANT

The visionary of *Warped Tour* that has gone on for almost two decades and worked with some of the top artists of the world. From hip-hop artists Eminem and Atmosphere, pop punk legends Green Day and Blink 182, punk veterans Rancid, Bad Religion and NOFX. The shadow of *Warped Tour* spreads pretty far and does not look to slow down. Kevin took some time to talk to HM Magazine, while setting up the nightly BBQ.

How is the tour going so far?

The tour is going well. Everyone is working really hard and working together. No problems, everyone is helping each other and staying on top of everything. The heat is getting to a few, (for the Texas dates) but the BBQ usually helps everyone out.

So there is no drama like there was between NOFX and Underoath a few years ago?

No, not at all. You know what? That was blown out of proportion by the media, Mike (NOFX) is Mike, and he is going to say what he wants, but it was nothing like the media made it out to be. People's views are their own, and we hold no judgment here on *Warped* and never will. I think that is one of the things that make us what we are.

Well, you mentioned the nightly BBQ, I know this is a tradition for the tour, but can you give us some insight on what goes on?

Of course. After every show, we clean up; make sure everything is ready to go before going on the road; some bands head off, some stay. The bands work so hard and are on this tour for a few months. I figure we can at least have some fun outside of the tour. Some really cool stuff happens, acoustic collaborations, covers, jokes, stories. It really brings the family together.

Well, what are your thoughts about the Christian Metal scene growing?

Well like I said, we don't pass judgment on anyone. If that is your thing, that is fine, but I am not worried about stuff like that. I am more worried about if you are a good band, an upcoming band and if the fans and I think you will be good for the tour.

Are there any plans for *Warped Tour* to go global?

We already did that. Been to Australia, Canada, Mexico, Japan, Europe, so that check list is done. But we are going to keep it here in the States from now on. A lot of money is spent going over seas, with insurance and moving all the parts; we can use that money for other things. Like feeding the bands every night, repairs to sets and getting more bands on the tour.

What is your opinion of the social media and how it has affected the tour?

Yeah, that stuff is really big. We have gotten lots of feedback on Facebook and Twitter and stuff. Fans post pictures, comments, and we can respond back and post up times the day of the shows for the fans to get. It really has changed a lot of things and everything is going digital now, so we try to stay with the times.

What are some of the artists you would like to work with or see on the tour?

Well, there will always be new bands. So that is constantly changing and you never know who the next big band is. Could be some kids here in the crowd watching their favorite artists right now. I have worked with all the artists I wanted to work with, including The Clash. I currently am working with Willie Nelson on a project. Also the artist that is missing from the *Warped Tour's* resume is Bob Marley, I think he would have really dug it. This is something he would have enjoyed and would have embraced.

Photographer Jeremy Saffer is holding a two-day seminar and workshop on photographing musicians (10/22). Joining Saffer will be **Mychildren Mybride** to help with giving attendees real-time experience in shooting a band.

As I Lay Dying will be releasing a new full-length early next year, but in the meantime are appeasing our craving for excellent metal with a 12-song album called *Decas*, celebrating their 10 years of existence. It'll feature three new songs, four covers and five remixes.

Manic Drive have a new album releasing on Sept. 27th called *Epic*.

MUTEMATH are on the road supporting *Odd Soul*, which drops Oct. 4th.

Family Force 5 are launching the *It's All Gold Tour* on October 26th in promotion of its new album, *III*, which hits Oct. 18th.

O'Brother has signed a deal with Triple Crown Records, who will release its debut full-length, *Garden Window*, in November.

The Great Transparency have replaced departed vocalist/guitarist **Jeremiah Wagner** with vocalist/guitarist **Zack Zaborski**. TGT has neither confirmed nor denied whether or not Zack had to provide proof that his name was indeed the abbreviated form of another Old Testament prophet, Zechariah as a prerequisite to join the band.

Kiros have signed with Ain't No Grave Records and will release its new EP, *Outlaws and Prodigals* on Sept. 27th.

Kansas is selling a commemorative book, *Dust in the Wind*, celebrating 35 years since the song's enormous impact on the music world. Proceeds of the book will benefit the non-profit Autism Speaks.

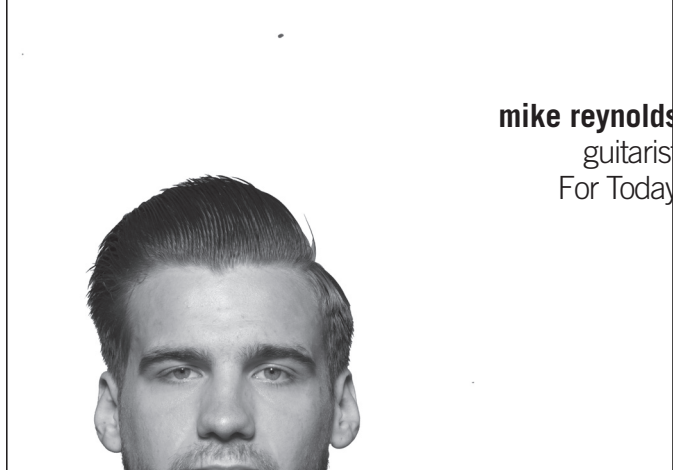
Stars Go Dim have a new EP coming out on Oct. 4th, called *Between Here and Now*, which is streaming now at starsgodim.com

Head has a new album coming out on Oct. 4th called *Paralyzed*.

Blindside have released a video for "Our Love Saves Us."

g_editorial

guest editorial, God editorial
top-ed (opposite the editorial page)



mike reynolds
guitarist
For Today

The foundation of every relationship is trust. When trust is nonexistent or broken the relationship cannot stand. It will crumble apart. Sometimes it will crumble apart slowly over the course of years. Sometimes it will come crashing down in a moment. Trust must be established firmly for a relationship to succeed.

Trust and faith are by definition the same. The way we hear those words and the context in which we hear them has greatly affected their definition. Faith has been defined as some esoteric substance that is acquired through prayer, fasting, and religious discipline. Trust has been defined as something that is only earned over time and proven faithfulness.

The following is the dictionary definition of these two words:

Trust – Firm belief in the reliability, truth, ability, or strength of someone or something

Faith – Complete trust or confidence in someone or something

In the case of Jesus, he has proven his love, we choose to believe him, to trust him, to have faith in him. This trust does not increase apart from... Trust.

Trust leads to deeper trust. Period.

Want more faith? Then choose to believe the one sent from God. It will grow from faith to faith. It can be the tiniest faith, but

the tiniest faith planted in truth can grow to be the biggest faith.

"Jesus told them, "This is the only work God wants from you: believe (verb, for faith) in the one he has sent" – John 6:29

"In it (the gospel) the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, but the righteous will live by faith." – Romans 1:17

"Let your roots grow down into him (Christ), and let your lives be built on him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness." – Colossians 2:7

Power from God does not require that we be educated about anything other than God's love. I need to know only that he loves me, that he cares for me, he has proven this by his life, death, and resurrection. The suffering servant, the tortured Messiah came because "God so loved the world." There is one thing I must know to be true and believe: God likes me. He is pleased to give me good gifts. He is pleased to provide for me, he is pleased to give me his glory, his power, his very life. The foundation of life is trust.

INK ON INK

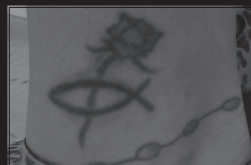
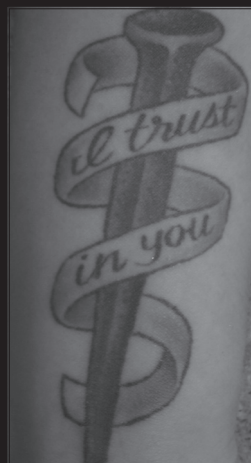
Our first installment of Ink on Ink featured Alexis Brown, from Straight Line Stitch, who was doing an on-air interview with our next guest – radio host **Kayla Riley**. They started talking tattoos and then HM Magazine, so quite literally one thing has led to another.



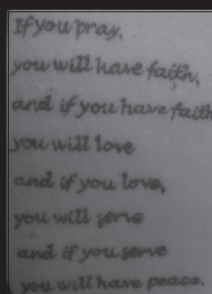
"It's kinda hard to pick one as I love them all for different reasons. But if I were to pick one, it would be the last one I got which is on the inside of my left wrist. It's a wooden nail with a ribbon wrapped around it that has the saying "I trust in you" along it. It was inspired by my mother, she would always say, "Jesus I trust in you" as a meditation, and it was the last one I got to help make me feel balanced. So, I think I'm done (ha ha).

"Music is something you feel from the inside. It's what makes you move or feel inspired, and I think visual art does a similar thing. You need to connect to the visual art to trigger emotions just like music does."

Kayla hosts several radio shows, including Sirius XM Radio on channels, *Octane*, *Boneyard* & *The Message Amped*. (See more of interview at hmmag.com)



"I think at first it was about getting something forbidden ... over the years it became something that represented a certain part of me. All my tattoos are religious based & it became a way I could balance the Catholic side of me & the rock n' roller side."



What's been the response to the Christian music you play on one of your shows?

"Overall the response is great. I hear from listeners who hang with me everyday, saying that they're so happy I have my Christian rock show & that I support those bands. You'll never be able to please everyone... It's another way for me to keep a healthy balance of the Christian rock 'n' roller inside me."

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LIVE REPORT

Cornerstone Festival
June 30 - July 3

REVIEW & PHOTOS BY REGGIE EDWARDS

(Bushnell, IL.) Heavy music, the undeniable presence of God and unbearable heat are all synonymous with Cornerstone Festival. This year the annual festival did not disappoint as it accomplished the impossible: in a place where the heat made you feel like you were in Hell, there was no denying God was there.

Thursday night's main stage package had the theme of "The Jesus Rally," which featured some of the pioneers and legends of the Christian rock. **Servant, Barry McGuire, Daniel Amos, Randy Stonehill, E Band, Resurrection Band, Phil Keaggy** and **Classic Petra** all took part in the festivities.

Perhaps the most highly-anticipated of the rally's lineup was Classic Petra. Even though it had been 25 years since this lineup had played together before this tour, it was as if no time had passed. The legendary rockers sounded impeccable, playing their *Back to the Rock* album in near-entirety. With **Greg X. Volz** running amuck on stage, **John Lawry** shredding the keytar, and **Bob Hartman** playing the guitar better than ever, one thing is for sure – Petra is back and good as ever.

Perhaps the surprise of the day was **For Today**. After **Write This Down** wrapped up, fans had already begun packing the main stage mosh pit. Then the hurricane hit (much to the fear of the kid dressed like a hot dog who got caught next to the circle pit). The sound of "Seraphim" from their latest record *Breaker*, hit. As if it were reflex (those who have been to a metal show knows the energy that comes with this), the large crowd began singing at the top of their lungs. This would continue for the entire set, making For Today an early favorite.

As if that wasn't enough, **Brian "Head" Welch** was up next and he put on one heck of a show, crazy and entertaining. Head interacted with the crowd, making jokes throughout and showing personality. At one point he walked down the catwalk and laid down, joking with the crowd that he didn't want to go on after For Today, because he's old and it was too hot, then asking a man in the front row if he was doing okay with the heat. His daughter, Jennea was there, too, and since it was her birthday, he sang her a "cover" of "All the Small Things" by Blink 182, explaining how she's going through a Blink phase. However his cover was more of a mockery, whiney and high-pitched. Very funny and entertaining. He ended his set with an instrumental KoRn medley of "Got the Life," "Here to Stay" and



"Freak on a Leash," complete with his signature crouched-over style of playing and his light brown braids flying around his head. In the middle of the set, he disappeared for a little bit, only to come back to stage shouting "Die, Religion, Die," and going into the song of the same title.

Blindside and **Anberlin** wrapped up the action on main stage Saturday night. Both were two of the more anticipated sets of the day. Blindside, with their Euro-rock, opened slowly and some of the fans weren't too fond of their opening, but they rebounded well and had the crowd moving and rocking out for the rest of the show.

Anberlin opened with the name on their backdrop being spelled wrong, but the focus was quickly diverted away from that when people noticed the triple drummers they had on the opening song. Anberlin had the crowd's attention and energy from the start to finish of their set, and after that, it was off to see **A Plea for Purging**.



Read an extensive review online at hmmag.com

Photos (clockwise from top): Blindside's Christian Lindskog; The Letter Black's Sarah & Mark Anthony; Manifest; Classic Petra's Greg X. Volz & Bob Hartman; Cole Wibelman from Every Knee Shall Bow



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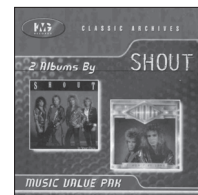
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Album: *Understanding What We've Grown to Be*

Label: Equal Vision

Release Date: September 13, 2011

Members: Dave Stephens, vocals; Kyle Pavone, vocals/keys; Joshua Moore, guitar; Lou

Cotton, guitar; Andy Glass, bass; Eric Choi, drums

RYL: Of Mice & Men, The Devil Wears Prada, Miss May I

wecameasromans.com



A buzz is being heard throughout the world of hardcore music, and no, that's not feedback on an amp that you hear. It's one of hardcore's newest powerhouses, We Came as Romans.

The band is fresh off a full stint on this year's *Warped Tour*, and according to guitarist and lyricist Joshua Moore, the tour was everything they'd hoped it would be.

"*Warped Tour* was very long and exhausting, but it was completely worth it. It was a great chance for us to play to a lot of kids who might not have seen our band before," Moore said. "I hope we get the chance to do it again, hopefully next year. If not, then the year after that."

Moore said *Warped Tour* was a great chance to spend time with friends who just so happen to have been playing the same stage all summer long.

"Because there are so many bands on it, and almost every band on our stage we already knew or toured with, so it was really awesome to get to hang out with them all summer," Moore said.

The band, together since 2005, only has two of its founding members still in its official lineup, Moore and unclean vocalist David Stephens.

However, the band has been at its present lineup since 2008.

We Came as Romans released two EPs, *Demonstrations* and *Dreams*, shortly before being signed with Equal Vision Records in April 2009 and promptly released their first full-length album, *To Plant a Seed*. Moore said the band's goal of being signed was a process that took four years, but because it was something they were all passionate about, they decided to stick with it.

The band debuted its sophomore full-length album, *Understanding What We've Grown to Be*, on September 13.

"It's definitely a little darker, a little heavier. I would say that the lyrics are a little more raw and honest than *To Plant a Seed*," Moore said. "It's more about acknowledging the things that go wrong and the bad things in life."

Although the band's lyrics lean toward a more positive message, Moore said the band is not a Christian band.

"As a band, when we decided that we wanted to have like a purpose and a meaning, we wanted to have a really positive message," Moore said. "We also decided that it was really important that it wasn't any sort of

religious message, because, I mean, that generally turns off people more than it gets them interested in what you're doing."

Moore also added that because there aren't a lot of bands that aren't a Christian band that have a positive message, We Came as Romans is often mistaken for a Christian band.

"It's just something that we all agreed with as a band that we wanted to be represented by," he added.

After the release of *Understand What We've Grown to Be*, We Came as Romans will embark on a North American tour with Miss May I, Of Mice & Men, Texas in July and Close to Home. Beyond this tour, the band plans to stay out on the road for the foreseeable future.

We Came As Romans has created a buzz that won't be silenced anytime soon, especially with an upcoming Australian stint with The Devil Wears Prada in late October.

"Next year we have other international plans that aren't exactly announced yet, but we do have them," Moore said. "We're going to try to stay on the road pretty much all of 2012 to really promote the album and just still do what we've always been doing, getting our message out to all our fans."

[Photo: Adam Elmakias]

BY BRIT TANY MCNEAL

Album: *Awakening*
Label: Fearless
Release Date: October 4, 2011
Members: Beau Bokan, vocals; Eric Lambert, guitar/vocals;
 Jared Warth, bass/vocals; Elliott Gruenberg, guitar; Matt Traynor, drums
 RYL: Silverstein, The Devil Wears Prada, As I Lay Dying

[facebook.com/blessthefall](https://www.facebook.com/blessthefall)

BLESSTHEFALL

Photo by Tim Harmon

With years of touring and two full albums under their belts Blessthefall are ready to release their new album *Awakening* in October. Faster, harder, and more confident, Blessthefall are truly Awake.

"The tour has been awesome, we're on the last couple of days. It has been about 5 weeks, shows start around 12 or 1, and going to about 10 or 11 at night. It's been gnarlier than *Warped Tour* hours-wise, but it has been great with great turnouts." Frontman Beau Bokan, referring to the *All-Star Tour* and how things have been over the past couple of weeks for the band being on tour again.

"We know that any band can go up there and play a bunch of songs, but we feel it is our duty to have a great show as well. We try to push it every tour and get further than before, and that is how it's been from day one."

"My first tour with the band was with Silverstein and Norma Jean for the *Shipwreck in the Sand Tour*. From then till now I just feel so much more comfortable on stage. I feel like our band has become closer than we have ever been. We have become such close friends and that chemistry shows on stage. We are relaxed and now it is

much more fun and comfortable and we can just do what we want and have a blast." Talking about how things have changed from his first tour with the band, to getting ready to headline the *Fearless Friends Tour*.

"I always draw off personal experience. I have been through a lot in the past couple of years, changing as a person and trying to find myself. There was an aspect of my life that was missing. I made a really huge change in my life and a lot of it has come from God." Explaining the writing process for the new album and inspirations that surround it.

"I grew up a Catholic, but kind of fell away from it. The last couple of years I have kind of become a born again and it is about a relationship with me and Christ. Some of the songs sound like they are about a girl, there are a few, but it will really be about God coming and changing my life and putting things in perspective. This album is a lot more positive and not so much negative. It is very positive and I think it is going to be really motivational to a lot of kids. We want to be role models, and something kids can look up to."

"They are the reason why we are here. It's cliché to say, but in all honestly it is

true. If it was not for them we would probably have some side job instead of being able to play music for a living."

"We toured a lot with AILD, Underoath and ABR and these bands that are super heavy and have so much energy and that honestly influenced our record. We wrote some of our heaviest songs we've ever written for this album. We enjoyed being on tour with those bands and being friends with them and the energy that came from it reflected on our music."

The band enjoys being fun and personal with their fans through various social media. "We do it for them, and they are there for us. We tweet about Oreos at one show, and the next day we get a bag of Oreos."

"It's so much deeper than just that, though. If I can go to the merch booth and spend some time with them and meet 50 to 60 kids, it makes a big deal to them and brings us closer to them. We truly do have the best fans in the world."

Album: *The King Is Coming*
Label: Facedown
Release Date: November 22, 2011
Members: Nick Tautuhi, vocals; Vasely Sapunov, guitar;
 George White, guitar; Mike Benson, bass; Ryan Wilson, drums
RYL: Evergreen Terrace, For Today

myspace.com/savingxgrace

SAVING GRACE

"Even the Christians don't behave like Christians. If you're a Christian, it's cool to hate other Christians. It's a hostile environment, but I can sympathize with the kids who are willing to stand up and represent it, because for a long time it was difficult and scary to live this way." Nicholas Tautuhi, the vocalist of Saving Grace, speaks about how intense the hardcore Christian scene is over in New Zealand. He mentions how many times their band has been criticized and looked down upon just because of the way they live.

Saving Grace learned first-hand not to proclaim their purpose (at shows). It was a mistake, because a lot of kids would get turned off and not give the band a chance, let alone the time to worship a chance. Vasely Sapunov, one of the guitarists in Saving Grace, agrees with Nicholas in that there have been plenty of times where kids come up after shows and try to debate and discourage the band for why they are playing. "But we always give glory to God. It's the reason why we do this. It's a blessing for us to be able to take a music that was potentially so damaging for us and use it to redeem others and use it for the Lord, you know?" Vasely explains passionately. After most shows, kids come up to the band and ask for prayer, reveal testimonies and praise the band to keep doing what they're doing. They enjoy being able to spend time with the fans and give them guidance and to help them further explain about His great love.

As dormant as the band has been recently as far as the live scene, they still hold the title as the longest hardcore Christian music careers in New Zealand. "We open every door that God's offered for us," explains Vasely. "We don't expect anything, but we are totally thankful." The band has been holding strong for almost eight years now and doesn't plan to stop anytime soon. "We love what we do and we know the ropes, so why stop?" proclaims Nicholas.

"A lot of people have been asking us what the new album is going to be like musically. Is it going to be more hardcore

or more metal? I think it's definitely more of a metal record, compared to what we've done previously, but it has a lot of hardcore elements like non-secular elements that you hear a lot in Slayer," Vasely explains. "We try to dip into some of our older influences and we listen to a lot of thrash, so we wanted to touch on that," Nicholas interjects. "Make a faster album, but also retain the heavy sound that we have with the heavy beat-down parts and the gang vocals."

Since Saving Grace has a new album, *The King Is Coming*, coming out, I thought I'd ask about the title. Nicholas starts, "I just think it's something that we need to be constantly prepared for. I think it's just about staying on your toes and not having this false sense of security that He's not coming back in my lifetime. I guess it's just to become ready and steadfast." Vasely agrees and adds in that it's a call to repentance – for Christians to wake up. To have their eyes open and be confrontational about it, but in a good way.

I am privileged to say that I got to interview these men of God. They had such a powerful presence about them and it definitely is portrayed throughout their live show and their music. Before parting ways, I asked if they had any life advice to give. "Put Christ at the center of your life and everything else will fall into place," says Vasely. On the other hand, Nicholas states, "Just not to worry about things. God's got it under control so don't panic. Life is always going to be nuts, don't aim for it not to be nuts, because it always will be. Rest in the Lord and trust that He's going to weigh out every situation no matter what it is. And do everything with a motivation of love."

So, go purchase *The King Is Coming* November 22nd and get inspired, informed, prepared and pumped all over again for where Christian metal is taking us.



Album: *Children of Fire*

Label: Solid State

Release Date: September 27, 2011

Members: Micah Kinard, vocals; Shane Blay, guitar/vocals;

Nate Grady, bass; James Erwin, guitar; Zac Mayfield, drums

RIYL: Underoath, The Devil Wears Prada, As Cities Burn

weareohsleeper.com

OH. SLEEPER

And so it begins, the prophetic imagery of the broken pentagram is fulfilled through the reigning choruses of the perilous journey in *Children of Fire*. A Godless nation rises and falls to the screams of a disgraced generation, finding glimmers of hope only in the rabid hands of a questioning soul, the daughter of a King.

Children of Fire is the finisher for the trilogy that metal band, Oh, Sleeper, initiated years ago from conception of the album entitled, *When I Am God*. Both musically and lyrically, Oh, Sleeper intercedes as narrators conveying the stark elements of brutality observed and acted out by a scarred human race: you and I. *Children of Fire* acts as a novel in which "every song is an integral chapter and a story," portraying a plethora of historical, biblical, and metaphoric texts.

Frontman Micah Kinard expresses the need to raise awareness for ongoing brutality in a world where we become elusive to reality. "I believe that God made us between the angels and the animals, whereas the animals are purely carnal beings and the angels purely spiritual. If we in the middle try to be one or the other, our spirit is going to be lacking, because we are not made to be purely spiritual beings...

so we're this beautiful blend of both," explains Kinard. As opposed to the blatant rigor of the battle between good and evil presented in their sophomore album, *Son of the Morning*, a dialogue concerning soul and flesh is brought to life in dissonant guitar riffs, progressive album structure, mechanical drum kicks, rigid bass lines and the intermingling of lovely and resonating singing with animalistic screaming. This dialogue alludes to a graphic discourse following the lives of a morbidly ruthless father and the tortured mind of his daughter, in which they experience an alternate paradigm of steel and skin. "In choosing the verbiage of marrying the steel to the skin, two completely opposing elements, it's supposed to represent the father trying to do the most noble thing by doing the most awful thing, and the most innocent one being taken advantage of in the worst way... to show the complete juxtaposition of beauty and ugliness." Words such as steel, skin, fire, smoke, father and daughter become "multi-translatable" to indicate specific "parallels" on a "molecular level." Every element associated with Oh, Sleeper is intentional, forcing the audience to obtain a personal interpretation of the infinite pits of depth conveyed by each texture. In a sense, Oh, Sleeper encompasses

the art of storytelling by articulating "through metaphor ... writing a story that the music already holds," says Kinard. For instance, Kinard and Blay display an elevated representation of feminine roles as God's "apex crown of creation," through references of innocence, rape and the multi-layered daughter figure. Also, Oh, Sleeper continually uses fire as a metallic and colorful theme to represent the intimate and beautiful power of God.

Holding true to the idea of delving into this horrifically poetic record, one must cling to the hope of redemption in order to fully grasp the message that we are capable of being "the true terrorists in the world" and yet also ruining those "instant carnal desires" so as to act on freedom we've been given by glory. You will quickly come to find that *Children of Fire* contains affable components, raw lyricism and barbaric musicality.

"And what defense feels like Heaven on my skin if finally I'm free to never breathe again, my body lifts from the ground it was rooted in and I pass a spark as it races to the rest of them."



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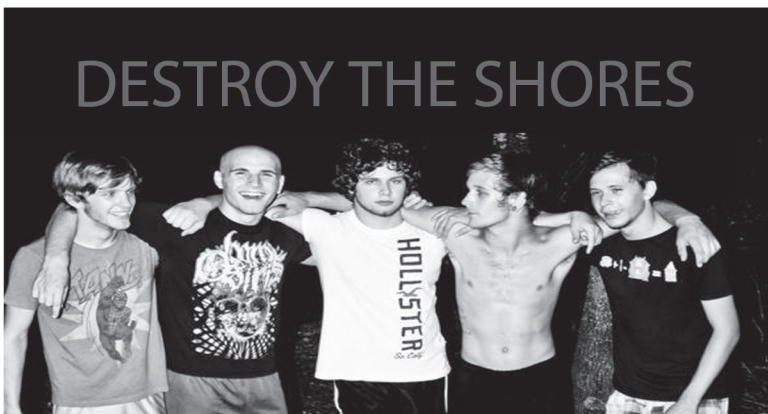


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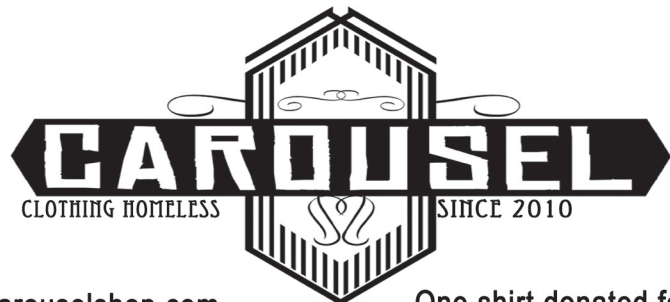
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Album: *self-titled*
Label: Mono vs. Stereo
Release Date: October 11, 2011
Members: Wes Blaylock; vocals/keys; Laura Blaylock; keys/synth;
 Wes Saunders, drums; Andy Moore, guitar; Justin Froning, bass
 RYL: Lydia, Easley

deasvail.com

DEAS VAIL

"These songs just have their own identity. I do not necessarily believe that they go with one another. Some of them do, but not always," says Wes Blaylock, the vocalist and keyboardist of Deas Vail.

Their new self-titled album, which comes out October 11th, is a wonderfully constructed album primarily about hope, summer and love. The new tracks are easily relatable, passionate and have such a positive message to them. "I'm married and I'm super happy. I have been fortunate with that and I think that inspired me with a couple of songs on this album.

"Married life is just absolutely amazing. I advise it for everyone. It's wonderful and I believe she is a huge reason for why I write," Wes happily explains. Laura Blaylock, the other original band member, met Wes in college and dated for three years (while touring, I might add), before getting married. He admits that it's not hard to define the line of wife and bandmate, but dating life was not so simple. "It was harder (then), because things were just so up in the air, as relationships usually are. And when you're on tour and can't really get away from each other, sometimes you just have to let it out and make it home."

Since the new album speaks of self and relationships, I asked Wes if he had any advice to offer. When it comes to relationships, he says just to talk to someone. It doesn't have to be a counselor or anything big. Just speak to someone that you trust. When it comes to life advice, Wes describes that it's all about slowing down. "It's good to get stuff done and it's good to be productive. But you need a balance. You need to balance productivity with 'me' time, down time. It just depends on where you are in life."

Wes and the rest of the band worked very hard, focusing on getting out a well-crafted and creative album that they're proud of. As things always come up, something came up and pushed back the album release date, but at the same time it created opportunities for itself. "Sony Red is picking up the distribution on this project and when we all celebrated, they told us they wanted to push back the date so they could have more time with what they needed to do. That is why things have been going a little slower, because a bigger player has jumped on board." So even though this put a damper on the kick-off date, Wes is still excited about this album, because they will be able to get their music out and heard by more

people than they would have otherwise. "So, I think in the long run, it will be well worth it."

"The biggest compliment we receive as a band is when we hear that our music is being shared with others. It is so awesome," Wes giddily explains. Deas Vail not only tries to inform fans what's going on in their world via multiple social media websites, but also intimately connects with them. Justin Froning (bass) and Andy Moore (guitar) are more of the tech-savvy people in the band, but they all collectively reply to fans on websites like Twitter and Facebook. It's amazing to see a band so dedicated, not only with their musical talents but also with their relational statuses with others.

Check out new videos, upcoming tour dates and keep up with the band at deasvail.com and make sure you get ready for their self-titled album coming out October 11th.



Album: *What I've Become*

Label: Fair Trade

Release Date: August 23, 2011

Members: Josh Smith, vocals; Rob Tahan, lead guitar; Jonathan Hively, bass; Ben Kirk, drums; Ryan Nalepa, rhythm guitar

RIYL: Decyfer Down, Skillet, Red

ashesremain.com

ASHES REMAIN

There comes a point in our lives when we must take a deeper look at the image seen on the reflection of the proverbial mirror showing who we are. Upon further examination, one finds that the image of self is scarred and transfigured by the all-consuming acts of our flesh. *What I've Become* is the utter quintessence of that internal examination process, seeping down into the cracks of experiences we've had as broken beings. On their debut album as a signed band, Ashes Remain exploits the inner being while showering it in the ever-so-familiar disguise of Christian rock. They are apostolic artists, and music is their medium.

Though this group of Maryland rockers may be a newly signed band, they are no stranger to the road, having spent the last decade pursuing the hearts of people through the use of music, conversation and relationship. Josh Smith, vocalist of Ashes Remain, explains, "we've been independent forever and we've had all of our triumphs and struggles and we've toured in an 87-foot bus across the country at 55 miles an hour. As Christians we have had seasons where we feel like we are at the center of God's will and seasons where we've fallen so short of the character that God wants us to have and I think that's where this

album was born. *What I've Become* is about that moment in time where you look at yourself and don't even recognize yourself."

Smith is an avid believer and enactor of compassion, especially for the youth of our nation who are often faced with challenges that have developed over the past decade. "I think in American Christianity there is such a danger of the 'happy people' mentality that if you know Jesus your life is going to be squeaky clean and you're never going to fall down. I just don't see that in the Bible. I see God's people failing over and over and I see God working in that failure."

Over the past decade, the members of Ashes Remain have traveled through a time continuum of pain and hardship. Smith explains, "I've been through suicidal periods in my life and my drummer has been through even worse." What we find in this statement is that *What I've Become* is a narrative of sorts, conveying personal stories and those of people they have encountered through divine appointment. Lyrics such as "my mind's a loaded gun" and "you want to bleed just to know that you are alive," encompass those very emotions experienced in the struggle. "Yet God is

the one who keeps us breathing. He's in those shadows with us. We're our own worst enemy and our own poison."

Ashes Remain is rooted in the call to obedience, knowing that God's gifts to us are irrevocable. After a decade of pursuing passion, the men of AR have come to adapt worship as a lifestyle, despite the shallow connotation this word has been given in the Church. "As I read Scripture I see God telling us that we are to worship in spirit and in truth. I'm told to offer my body as a living sacrifice and this is my spiritual act of worship." Smith discusses an eternal perspective that leads back to the kind of worship Paul experienced in prison, "to be in that dark place" and realize that God brought you there because He loves you.

So what makes a group of mainstream Christian rockers so unique? It's the fact that these men have been set apart by God and they are constantly chasing after His heart and those of His children.

Two weeks ago, I was asked to conduct a last-minute interview with Andy Atkins of A Plea For Purging, where I proceeded to text-beg him to “please hastily reply to my questions” – which I had yet to conjure up. After a bumpy, contemplative drive through Montana interstates and the mountains lining the highways which spurned my creativity, Mr. Atkins received my inquiries... and responded within 12 hours of an irresponsible freelancer’s schedule. I do not lie when I say that this is the best interview I have ever received from anyone in four years’ worth of experience as a music journalist and there is nothing that I could do, creatively, to add to it. It is twice as long as it was supposed to be, but my illustrious editor miraculously believed with me that it deserved to be run in full.

If you could break down what *WASP* is into a concise mission or vision statement – whether that be in regards to faith or creativity or an all-inclusive purpose – what would it be?

A Plea for Purging has been many things in its five-year run. We have had many things to say. Our music and message are always changing, just as the four of us grow in maturity in our adult lives. The one constant goal has been to be honest with our friends, family and fans. Music is nothing more than a product – if you’re not being honest with your art. We have been through many ups and downs in our personal lives and spiritual walks. We have done our best to convey an honest reflection of that in our music, so that our fans can grow alongside of us. I believe that honesty and transparency have allowed us to connect with our fans on more levels than we ever would have imagined.

At Cornerstone Festival this year, you spoke about a really rough year in regards to the loss of both your parents – something that resonated deeply to my own recent circumstance. How has that experience impacted your writing on this most recent Plea album and, more importantly, the way that you view and live life in any regard?

I knew these sort of questions would begin to flow in after opening that fact up to the public. I haven’t really even prepared myself on how to answer them. To be honest, I haven’t even completely figured out how to deal with the situation. I guess

acknowledging it to the public was a bold step in coming to terms with everything that has gone on, as I am one to suppress feelings normally. This will be the first interview in which I will dive deeper into answering this question. Forgive me for incomplete thought fragments and being scatter-brained in my reply.

For the majority of last year my “father” was on his deathbed due to years of drug and alcohol abuse. One would think this would deeply affect me, but I was stone cold to the fact that he was dying. See, my dad skipped out on being a father long ago. He wasn’t there, ever. I am the man I am today because of the upbringing of my mother. I think the hatred towards my dad for leaving me also pushed me to better myself and to be the person I wanted to be. “Positive momentum begins with negative tension.” (Jason Berggren)

My mother and sister wanted me to go see my father before he died. I didn’t really feel the need. I had already put that aspect of my life behind me, but I told myself and them, “If he asks me to come see him, I will go, ‘cause I will never be able to forgive myself for denying his last request.” Guess what, he couldn’t get over his pride enough to ask his son to come

see him. I left town for Minnesota to spend Thanksgiving and my one-year anniversary with my girlfriend, Rachel. Knowing that my dad’s health was grim, I expected a call at any time and the day after Thanksgiving I received a call that would change my life forever.

I was raised by my mother. She was a wonderful woman. She was my best friend from childhood to my adult life. She was my rock when I had no one. I grew up riding the fence of poverty. We had little, but I lacked nothing. My mother worked two jobs through my entire childhood to clothe me, feed me and pay for my outstanding medical bills, as I was a terribly sick child. I had asthma pretty bad. I may not have had the coolest shoes or priciest jeans, but I had what I needed. My mom always supported me and my crazy dreams. I told her at an early age that I didn’t plan on living like everyone else. I planned to run, chase and live the dreams I had in my mind. She was a worrier and wanted the best for me, but she let me go into the world. Yeah, she’d give me the “You should go to college” speech once every six months, but she knew that wasn’t my thing and she’d never win. I’m almost 30, she never won.



A PLEA

A PLEA FOR PURGING 25

BROKEN, HURT,

FOR

PISSED, ANGRY,

PURG

SAD

ING

BY LEVI MACALLISTER



THRICE

A WRINKLE IN TIME

BY COREY ERB

Getting older is inevitable. Many bands react by changing members, taking extended breaks from the road or flaming out quickly and breaking up all together. **THRICE** has done none of that. For 13 years, they've aged gracefully – with the same members, frontman Dustin Kensrue, guitarist Tappei Teranishi, bassist Eddie Breckenridge and drummer Riley Breckenridge. From one album to the next their sound is different, but unmistakably Thrice. Their latest, *Major/Minor*, comes following a rare period of turmoil, during which both Teranishi and Kensrue had to leave tours and all four members dealt with family tragedies. All this has led to speculation that this would be their last album. Teranishi talks about the end of Thrice (or not) and the process of putting together this album, an understandably heavier, more aggressive set.

After *Beggars* leaked months early, you released this one early on vinyl and streamed it track-by-track on your website. What were your reasons behind those decisions?

Tappei Teranishi: Basically, just trying new ways of rolling a record out. I know everyone says this, but the music industry is such a rapidly changing environment right now and so I feel like there's room for experimentation like that. I guess we'll see if it was a good idea or not.

Why did you choose to record with a producer (Dave Schiffman, who engineered 2005's *Vheissu*) this time?

It just felt right. We'd self-produced/engineered our last few and we wanted to change the dynamic up again. It was a huge relief for me, since I was the one doing the recording. Not pulling double duty was really refreshing, and it was really great as a guitar player to only have to worry about playing my guitar.

You've mentioned previously you don't listen to much music to inspire your albums, was that the case this time? If not, where did you get inspiration from?

Well, to clarify, we're always listening to music – lots of it. It's just more that what we listen to doesn't always directly influence what we write. For me personally, I was listening to a lot of Motown type stuff, mellow jazz – Miles Davis, Chet Baker, etc. – and even some early-'90s hip-hop like De La Soul and A Tribe Called Quest while we were writing this record; but obviously, our record doesn't sound like any of that. I do believe that there's definitely elements or nuances of what I was listening to that snuck its way into my writing but it never dictates the bigger picture.

As you've grown up as a band, your music has changed. How do you decide what style you're going for on each album?

We never have an agenda – *The Alchemy Index* records being an exception, since that was a conceptual thing – and honestly, we ourselves never have any idea



what the next record will sound like until fairly late in the writing process when everything starts taking shape.

The term “grunge” has been thrown around about this album. Would you call that accurate, and was that something you were going for? Would you have wanted to be a band in that era’s heyday?

Sure yeah, I definitely see that. We were joking about how all the songs were sounding very early-90s while we were writing. It wasn’t intentional. It’s just that whenever you write something in a concentrated amount of time, themes always develop, whether it’s conscious or not and I guess that was sort of an unsaid theme that ended up happening.

What’s one thing (or 11 different things) you’d want a listener to take away from *Major/Minor*?

Radness.

If you had to pick an era of Thrice, *First Impressions* to *Major/Minor*, to relive every day à la *Groundhog Day*, which era would you pick and for what reasons?

I think the answer to that question will always be the latest era, since that’s what I’m most excited about. It’s always going to be where my head’s at currently.

With all that’s happened over the last couple years, do you ever get chances to slow down? What do you do in those moments?

Rarely. I spend my time with my family — my wife and two sons. We just moved up to an island in Washington and so our pace of life has slowed tremendously compared to the frenzy that is Southern California. We’re outdoors a lot. We have a lot of land to tend to and an incredibly beautiful island to hang out on.

What keeps you going as a band after so long?

We’ve been blessed with incredibly loyal listeners, we get along and we love what we do.

Is this going to be Thrice’s last album? What decisions are going to inform when or if you end it?

I guess when someone in the band says “it’s done.” Hasn’t happened yet though (laughs).



SWITCHFOOT

FACES LIKE FLINT

BY DOUG VAN PELT

SPENDING TONS OF TIME IN THE STUDIO IS OVERRATED. JUST ASK JON FOREMAN OF SWITCHFOOT. AFTER COMING INTO PRE-PRODUCTION WITH 80-SOMETHING SONGS FOR THEIR LAST ALBUM, *HELLO HURRICANE*, THE BAND WALKED INTO THIS ONE WITH THEIR GAME FACE ON. FOCUSED AND RESOLUTE WITH MUCH FEWER SONGS, SWITCHFOOT MADE THE STUDIO THE FINISHING POINT OF THE PROCESS. THE RESULT: *VICE VERSES*.

“We would track the songs in soundcheck. My brother and I were much more intentional on this record on using the studio time a little bit more sparingly. So, instead of tracking 80 songs in the studio, he and I whittled it down to maybe 20 or 25 that we actually did demos for on the road. You know, you get everything sound-checked and it sounds good for the evening and then you’ve got maybe — on a good day you’ve got 15 or 20 minutes to spare before the opening band takes the stage, and we would learn the song and track it without the vocals and try and get all the parts sketched out,” Foreman describes with an allusion to the visual arts. “And just really broad strokes. And then we went through all of those demos and picked the songs from there. We tried to be very selective with this record to avoid some of the mistakes we made on *Hello Hurricane* and kind of stand on the ground that *Hello Hurricane* had brought us to, so that we weren’t recording a monster, but very decisively recording an album.”

An artist is often his or her own harshest critic, so if Foreman sees flaws in 2009’s *Hello Hurricane*, that’s his prerogative. In reality, he’s probably in the minority, as it was a stellar release (it did win a Grammy) that found the band exploring new territory and finding success wherever it placed its feet. Granted, it was all over the place stylistically, so one can hardly blame the band for wanting to narrow the focus a little.

“I think *Vice Verses* might be,” Foreman surmises when asked to compare it to

“...we couldn’t have tracked *Vice Verses* without having first tracked *Hello Hurricane*.”

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previous work. “If you’re going to parallel it, it might be a little bit more analogous with *Nothing Is Sound* in that I feel like it ushered in a new phase for us. Before *Hello Hurricane* we cut ties with everyone in a sense – in record companies and and and...” he purposely repeats for emphasis. “We built our own studio. We just kind of untethered from anything that could have formed us in the past, and we just recorded a ton of music. I feel like we learned a lot about ourselves in the process. We’ve learned a lot about the kind of music that we want to continue to make. Ultimately, the songs that only Switchfoot can sing.”

They say that if you’re not growing, you’re dying, and it’s apparent with even a casual listen of *Vice Verses* that Switchfoot are still growing and full of life. “There’s a lot of different parts of us that musically I feel like people will get to know down the line, but I feel like the anthems of hope are the things that keep me excited about music – especially in this band – night after night.”

While Switchfoot are forward-thinking and very much in the here and now, Foreman makes a concerted effort to explain how the past has got him here. “You know the phrase, ‘If you ain’t crying, why are you singing it?’ I think it is attributed to Dolly Parton,” he says. Turns out the band lived that motto on the previous album. “‘What are the songs you want to die singing?’ That was the kind of over-arching theme of *Hello Hurricane*. I feel like we couldn’t have tracked *Vice Verses* without having first tracked *Hello Hurricane*. *Hello Hurricane* laid the groundwork and foundation for what we wanted to accomplish. And understanding ourselves and even just the practical elements of having a studio with the kinks worked out ... to be able to invite Neal Avron and Adam Hawkins down to our place and record the record there. One laid the foundation for the other.”

Turns out the title-track (“Vice Verses”) was written during the recording of *Hello Hurricane*. “We all loved the song. We felt like it was among the better songs that I had written in a long time, and yet it felt like something different and something new, and that’s why we waited and kind of built the record around that one song and the kind of polarity of the landscape that that lyric provided. It has been really informative and allowed the other lyrics to come into their own.”

Another one of the few songs that made it from the previous album’s sessions was “Selling the News,” which has an interesting spoken-word delivery. It might shock a few of the band’s fans, but not the ones that might’ve recently seen ‘em cover The Beastie Boys in concert. “I grew up listening to Digable Planets, A Tribe Called Quest and De La Soul,” the versatile frontman explains. “I love what a lot of folks are doing – whether it’s Talib Kweli, Common or whoever. I was trying to think of a way that I could deliver something that was a little bit more along those lines. For me, I just kind of go back into the history of American music, and whether you’ve got Johnny Cash or Bob Dylan or any of that old-time Western, spoken word is a part of that. I kept thinking about all these things and the theme of having a society where our information is delivered to us by entities that make their money off the sensationalizing of the issues at hand. I felt like it was that kind of fire. That’s kind of where the song came from. The whole song kind of wrote itself. I couldn’t find a melody to put to it, so I figured I’d just say it, ya know?” he laughs.

Fortunately, for us, laughter is no doubt a common occurrence within Switchfoot. They are a veteran act that’s comfortable with where they’re at, but still full of enough energy and fire to keep from getting complacent. That bodes well for an audience that appreciates good music.



A Plea for Purging | cont'd

I will never forget the call I got on November 26th, 2010. My sister, broken on the other end of the phone line says, "Mom's dead. She shot herself." Not the call I was expecting. Sure, I was ready and prepared to hear that dad had died. I expected *that* to be the news. Needless to say, I was floored beyond belief. Broken, hurt, pissed, angry, sad. I've never felt such a pain in my entire life. I honestly hadn't cried since I was 13 years old. I quickly remembered the feeling of tears streaming down my face and the burning in my heart. It was a call I wish on no one.

"...I've never felt such a pain in my entire life. I honestly hadn't cried since I was 13 years old..."

I could go into describing my mother, her life and trying to explain to you why she would do such a thing, why she would leave her children to question so much, but I don't know the answers and don't owe any of you that conversation really. I just know that I've never felt so alone. My number one, my rock in human form, was no more.

Two weeks later I receive the call I had expected to get. My father had passed away after tormenting his body with drugs for 30 years. After the hard blow of my mother's passing, the news was nothing more than a waste of my time. I didn't have enough grief in my body for a drunkard that didn't care about me after crying two weeks straight for a mother that left me, just like he did long ago.

I just realized I ranted for some seven paragraphs without answering your question. I guess the mind starts going and sometimes it's just hard to stop it. I haven't figured out what this all means to me. I am angry. I am pissed. I am cynical. All the Christian kids that pick up this magazine and read this article can't say anything to change that. I have heard every simple Christian Sunday School answer, but it's all emotionless vomit spewing from the mouth of zombies, robots programmed to say those things, just to pacify the situation until you walk away. Plea is my outlet. I have been given this gift to have a way to express my feelings and thoughts about life and the world. I am blessed to have these guys as my best friends. They have been a crutch in getting past this all. They really allowed me to take this record as my own, lyrically speaking and vent what's on my mind. Yes, this topic is addressed in the record, as well as many of the feelings that this situation has left me with. It has been therapeutic and needed. I'm still far from over or past this dark point in my life, but it too shall pass.

You guys have been around for a good amount of time. As you look back at the band's history, can you give me a picture of what Plea was and what it has become over the years? What has kept you going and what has changed? Tell me about the process of being friends in a band that commit themselves to growth and maturity together. Is it nostalgic? What things do you hold, collectively or individually, as motivators for moving forward?

We have done our best to keep our friendship at the forefront of what's most important to us. We care more for each other than the success or perceived success of this band. I think that has allowed us to move along with integrity and pushed us as far as we have come. We are proud of the accomplishments this band has under its collective belt. We haven't been ones to play "the game"

of the industry. We've had to do a lot on our own, because we didn't lay down and allow agents, managers, bands and labels to walk on us. Maybe this has stifled our success, maybe it hasn't. We are proud of this, either way.

We started by selling all of our possessions, moving out of our homes and jumping into a life of homelessness for five years. We had each other, a couple dollars a day and a dream. We've had ups and downs. We've had killer tours and then the tours that killed us. Five years later we still love each other and love creating music together. There has been little lineup change in the band since leaving Nashville. The two past guitarists both left on a good note, wanting to pursue life outside of music. They are still our best buds and we support them as they support us. This band is a family.

We are so unbelievably over the scene, industry and game that is "music." We have so much invested into the relationships with each other and the relationships we've made on the road with thousands of friends all over the country and world that we aren't yet ready to give them up. Music is the medium in which we converse with the world and the conversation isn't quite over yet. That is our driving force.

*I remember a conversation Tommy Green and the two of us were having, where Tommy, half joking/more seriously told you that you'd better get up on stage and be pissed, because you made a pissed record and he wanted everyone to take you seriously (paraphrase). Plea is obviously a very serious project, but it has also got its goofy, quirky side. How do you tow the line between being the "DooDooDoods" and the "take me seriously" dudes? Is the balance ever a point of contention? What is your response, when the response to **WPS** is dismissive on account of the "party plea"?*

My first and most important response to this question, I love Tommy Green. Ha, ha. I am over that serious, cocky, dark demeanor that is the metal persona. Let's break down what being in a band really is. Take notes kids, 'cause these are the guys you worship. Some dudes ranging in the age of 16-30

decide they don't want to work a "real" job. They don't want the responsibility of bills and providing for themselves. What's the easiest way to dodge these responsibilities? Start a band, live off of your parents. Travel from town to town eating free food at random kids' houses, use their water and electricity and beg for money at the merch table to buy some Taco Bell. If you're lucky, you start making a little money, spending it on frivolous stuff as opposed to saving and investing. Five years down the road you realize you have nothing, and you have to get a job at Guitar Center or Hot Topic. That is the reality of being a "band dude." Throw in a few tattoos for scene points.

I say all this because, we are very self-aware of who we are. We aren't going to put off some serious, pretentious vibe when we were goofy kids that wanted to tour hard and light farts on fire in the van. With that being said, we are very serious about our art and music. That is what matters most, not appearances. If our music speaks to the listener in any way, we are pumped to have been able to be a part of that. If we are dismissed because of our appearance or obvious sense of humor in what we do, then that ear wasn't meant to hear what we do, and that heart wasn't meant to connect with ours.

In a related side note: I have found that after presenting ourselves as the good-time party boys, it has been hard to up hold that appearance at all times. Although we love to joke and have a good time, we have our somber days, just like anyone else. Kids have come to expect us to be lively and funny at all times. Sadly, that isn't possible. I find it hard to put on that face on the bad days, and I think kids don't understand we are just as emotionally unstable as they are. That is a hard thing to tackle on the road.

On The Marriage of Heaven & Hell you wrote in the song "Shiver": "Lord knows I'm a cynic, but I won't give up. Won't give in." I must admit that I've been pretty cynical about a lot of things — especially in regards to the "Christian music world" — something I need heaps of grace for when I open my mouth. Where are you now? Where does your cynicism linger and where has it receded?

With the passing of my parents, the cynicism really has grown stronger. I am not the same naive kid I used to be. I am scared. I have been hurt. We all have. I don't mean to come off like a depressing, "Oh, whoa is me" kind of guy. I am constantly battling with myself over many topics. I question everything. I mean everything! I don't have the answers and don't know when or if I will find them. I have grown

apathetic to many of those questions. Apathy has a strange comfort that is easy to rest in. Ask me this question in another year, and maybe I'll be able to answer it in a more positive light. I still haven't given up. I still haven't given in.

I seem to remember a good amount of gossip surrounding that record. You guys caught some flak with folks fancying over it being specifically directed towards certain bands or whatever... I know you've already had interviews about that album, but can you tell me a little bit about what you experienced after it had been released, when people were busy putting words in your mouth about what you meant?

The internet, Google and Wikipedia have turned every little keyboard warrior and internet junkie into an expert on everything. I love going to our Facebook and seeing kids answer questions that other kids have posted on our wall with completely incorrect answers. I went on Wikipedia one day and saw that Mattie Montgomery had appeared on our *Marriage* record solely because there was a rumor that one of the samples on the record was him speaking, which was incorrect. Who was the self-proclaimed Plea expert that took it upon themselves to put that false information out to the world? Ha ha.

I have answered what that record was about and what each song individually was about 100 times over, and it could be lifted from any interview/blog post off the internet. If kids don't get it by now, they never will. We have grown a lot since that record and maybe look back and see that we could have handled some of those views and thoughts differently, but I don't regret having those thoughts. I don't regret being honest with our fans about the vision we had of the world around us at that time. I think it's important for the listener to have a clearer view of the industry that they look up to so much. I will say this: We were not slandering specific bands or hanging our friends' bands out to dry. We were talking about ourselves as much as the next band on the next label.

You guys are in the studio right now. How has it been? Your touring schedule is usually pretty relentless. Do you write on the road, or in the studio, or what? Has losing Tyler this last year created any problems/notable changes that have been difficult to overcome, or notably affected your writing process?

The writing process for each record usually begins soon after the release date of the previous record. We are always striving to push ourselves and our abilities. We also have varying influences and desire to move the band forward to new territories in the realm of genres. Blake riffs around on his guitar. Aaron jams on his drums. They continually track stuff, little ideas here and

there. Eventually we realize we've toured on a record long enough and that we're ready to play new songs, so we'll take some time off the road and hash out ideas. This record really came together between the months of May and July of this year. We entered the studio on August 1st and left September 1st. We are very proud of this record and feel that it is our best work yet, as I say with every record.

The departure of Tyler hasn't disrupted us in any form other than the loss of a great friend to hang out with on a daily basis. Blake and Aaron have always been the primary songwriters, musically speaking. They did a phenomenal job on this effort and I was lucky to have another solid record full of music to put vocals on.

I'm seeing updates from Random!thesaurus studios that compare drum tracks to those of our dear Limp Bizkit's *Golden Cobra* (which is obviously the most exciting compliment you've ever received). Where are you guys going, stylistically, with this record? What elements of progression are you the most excited about, instrumentally, structurally and thematically?

I feel as though Plea has always had a distinct sound from our early days of trying to play dragon metal (that's what I call that weird, bullcrap, long-hair metal, ha ha.) Even though we have changed stylistically since our first EPs and *A Critique of Mind and Thought* we have still managed to keep the Plea sound. I think so, at least. This record is another leap in our career of trying to outdo ourselves. We have progressed with our songwriting. With every record we learn more about writing a solid song, as opposed to showing off with wicked solos and the heaviest breakdown. There is a sense of maturity in this record we have failed to hit on all previous efforts. It still sounds like Plea, but it is a more grown-up Plea, and it only makes sense. We are men, not kids.

After having read through your lyrics, they remind me of the Psalms, moving from joy and belonging in songs like "Music City" to the sheer heartbreak and abandonment of "My Song" and "Living The Dream" in an instant. The latter resonates like a terror in my anxious, traveling mind, hoping that I'll not regret taking my wife and I away from our families, whose lives move on without us. And the lyrics about searching for the "greenest grass you'll never find" - great, great song 2Indy. - And finally, the question: have the fears you've spoken of ever compelled you towards foregoing it all for a sense of "normalcy" in your life? I think maybe a question touring artists wrestle with is: when do you decide that you're going home, or stopping to create one?

Being in a small "underground" touring band is such an unstable thing. Everything you've built up can crumble so quickly. This is a life of pinching pennies and sleeping on floors. Touring will make you or break you. Not everyone is cut out for this life and that is okay. Five years ago I made some decisions that greatly affected my life, we all did. It's been a fun ride but a hard one. As you spoke of, it is incredibly hard to watch your friends and family's lives move on without you while your life is kind of suspended in time. Touring is kind of like freezing time. Everyone around you grows up, gets older and proceeds with life as you keep doing the same thing,

playing the same songs, the same shows, to the same kids. It is inevitable that this pause in time will have to end and we, too, will have to move on with our lives.

The older we get the more this reality is clear. Being that the four of us are friends and are on the same page with what this band is and where it is going, we are free to have these kinds of discussions with each other. Being open and honest with each other about the concerns of the consequences this band may bring upon us is healthy. We all have made a conscious decision to move on with our personal lives a bit, purchasing homes, getting married, buying motorcycles ... you know, adult stuff, but we haven't given up on this band, its music and its fans just yet. We are still very excited to carry on the relationship this band has with its fans and to continue making music until it just isn't possible to do so in our personal lives. It's a positive place to be in our career.

Tell me about the future of A Plea For Purging? You guys have been on Facedown Records for a long time and again with *The Life & Death of...* It's a label I've heard you speak highly/affectionately of. Do you ever see yourselves anywhere else? Can you tell me why, especially at a time when many of their bands are moving on who haven't had the longevity Plea has, you're staying?

Although we have been at this for some time now, we are still quite a small band. We aren't a household name. We are a baby band comprised of men. As I mentioned before, our work ethic and take-no-bullcrap stance has put us in a place to where we have had to do a lot on our own in the past five years. One constant that has always been there for us is Jason and Facedown Records. Jason gave us a chance when no one else would. He poured money into our first record that sounded terrible. He saw something in our fat, hairy, messy band that no one else saw. He has always allowed us complete creative control of our music. He has never asked us to do something we didn't want to do. We have never been rubbed the wrong way in the slightest bit by Facedown. They have given us unwavering support. *The Marriage* CD fulfilled our contract with Facedown. We had the chance to move on. Jason encouraged us to shop and look at what else might be out there, even offered a reference to anyone we wanted to go with. Now I could lie and



FAMILY FORCE 5

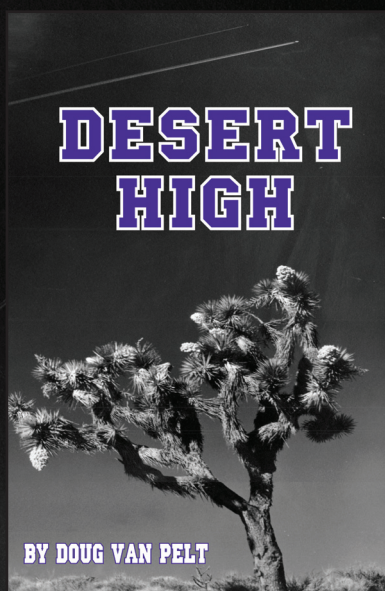




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Photos by Reggie Edwards

A Plea for Purging | cont'd

tell you we had all the labels chomping at us or I could be honest and tell you we had a few options. When it came down to it, we knew that we loved Jason, Virginia, Davey, Shannon and David as people first and as a label second. Why go somewhere else and let someone else reap any benefit from the work Jason and Facedown has sowed into Plea?

If you could resurrect any band from the past — any band, at any point in their career — to see a show that you either weren't alive to see or missed and never got the chance to experience, or experienced and want to relive, who would that band be and why?

Gosh, it may sound dumb, but this is one of the harder questions to answer in this interview. I am a fan of music in general. I have a fairly wide pallet of taste as far as music goes. Since I was young child, I have been obsessed with music. I used to sit in homemade forts in my bedroom and record songs off the radio with my tape recorder, then play those songs back over and over for hours and those songs weren't from metalcore bands. When you really sit back and think about all the different genre phases you've gone through in your life, you begin to expect that this style of music you are so deeply rooted in will be just another phase as well. I could give you examples of a number of older hardcore bands I never got to see that I'd love to see at their peak. I'm sure the shows would be intense, but after going to hardcore and metal shows for 15 years now, nothing is new. The feeling of excitement has dulled over the years. To adequately answer this question, I am going to add a piece to the scenario.

At this age in my life, I love music very much still, but to be completely honest, I don't love it as much as I did when I was a kid. Shows these days, I pay more attention to the venue, crowd participation, the professionalism of the band and the production. It's a sad thing when the professional musician in me takes over a show-going experience. Like I said, I've listened to a lot of music over the years and followed many bands. I gotta be completely honest and somewhat generic in my final answer. I owe a large amount of my career in music to hearing Nirvana's *Nevermind* record. I was a poor, chubby kid that didn't fit in. I latched on to this band and felt new feelings music had never really given me before. I learned how to play drums and guitar to their records. I wanted to see them live so bad. It never worked out for obvious reasons. If I could reverse time to an age where I knew nothing about music but the way it made me feel and I could see Nirvana play all the highlights of my favorite songs from each of their records, I would be in teenage heaven.

Do you think that when John gets married, he'll let his wife shave his body, or do you think that he'll hold out for a wife that wants a hairy man, or do you think that his goal will be to find a wife who is equally as hairy so that it's never a topic of discussion, because it's just natural that they should be hairy together?

Well, actually ... Mr. John Wand will be getting married this October 1st, 2011. He will be married to the future Wendy Wand. They have been together for just about the entirety of this band and she has been alongside him through all of his shedding and beard growth. I assume she loves it or is unbelievably accepting of it. I do believe he is

shaving it off for the wedding via the wish of his grandmother, though.

Is there anything else that you'd like to say — about life or love or music or your new album or your old albums or about mountain climbing or Alaska or cigars or movies or, yeah ... well, life, really — to close us out?

Don't take my thoughts as the resounding views of A Plea for Purging. I am just one member of this entity. We are all varying in views. This band is comprised of strong willed/minded individuals. Also, don't take my words as cynical in overall tone. I am a realist. I am honest to the point of pain at times. I love this band and the guys I share it with. I am blessed to have had all the experiences I've had and continue to embark on. I am positive and hopeful for the future of A Plea for Purging. On November 8th 2011, Facedown Records will release a collection of songs dubbed *The Life and Death of A Plea for Purging*. It is the best work from the band to date. I am excited about trying to outdo it even more on the next record, if we are so blessed to be able to make another.

✕

36 COVER STORY

THE DEVIL WEARS KILLING THE BEAST

BY JEFF SISTRUNK

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ARS PRADA

AVERAGE PERSON TODAY MAY NOT LITERALLY WORSHIP GOLDEN CALF, BUT THERE'S NO SHORTAGE OF ALL-SUMING DISTRACTIONS THAT CAN TAKE A HEAVY TOLL ON THE HUMAN SPIRIT. WHETHER IT'S THE PURSUIT OF FAME, POPULARITY OR WEALTH, TELEVISION OR AN OBSESSION WITH A CERTAIN GUY OR GIRL, FALSE IDOLS ARE EVERYWHERE. ON THEIR FOURTH FULL-LENGTH LP, *DEAD AND BURIED*, DAYTON, OHIO'S **THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA** — FRONTMAN MIKE HRANICA, LEAD GUITARIST CHRIS RUBEY, RHYTHM GUITARIST JEREMY DEPOYSTER, BASSIST ANDY KOPPEL, DRUMMER DANIEL WILLIAMS AND KEYBOARDIST JEFFREY BANNEY — ENCOURAGE LISTENERS TO KICK THOSE IDOLS FROM THEIR PEDESTALS.



"The title of the record refers to our tendency to make things into kings that were never meant to be kings," Hranica said.

With its searing guitars and melodic textures, topped off by Hranica's signature gut-wrenching vocals and shots of DePoyster's clean singing, *Dead Throne* is a natural progression of The Devil Wears Prada's sound and a sharp departure from last year's bombastically heavy, horror-themed *Zombie* EP. The disc also marks the first time in the band's career Joey Sturgis hasn't manned the producer's chair: the band instead opted to record with Killswitch Engage guitarist and increasingly in-demand knob twiddler Adam Dutkiewicz at his Westfield, Massachusetts-based Zing Studios.

The *Dead Throne* sessions saw The Devil Wears Prada continue on with the writing process they first incorporated on *Zombie* EP. Guitarist Chris Rubey again took the lead on the songwriting front, composing 10 of the album's 13 songs alone on music-production suite *Logic Studio* on his laptop. This approach contrasts with the full-band jamming that produced the first three albums.

"For every album up through *With Roots Above and Branches Below*, we would all get into the room and jam," Rubey said. "Because of our crazy touring schedule the last few years, we adopted a new writing style where I would write alone on the computer, then show the guys the ideas once the guitar, bass, drums and song structure were down. I've grown to be able to transcribe ideas I hear in my head onto the laptop really well."

That's not to say jamming didn't factor into *Dead Throne*. After Rubey had the outlines of the songs together, the band held two weeklong writing sessions, one in the Lawrence, Kansas, area and one in Chicago, in which all the members learned their parts. Those sessions produced the appropriately titled cuts "Kansas" and "Chicago" – which both rank among the album's most affecting and haunting material – as well as the brutal "Forever Decay."

"It's interesting, the songs we jam together on are more simple and direct," Hranica said. "They sound a lot more like what we used to do on *Plagues*."

Hranica invited Jeremy McKinnon from A Day to Remember out to the *Dead Throne* sessions during pre-production to bounce ideas off of.

"It was great to have a second set of ears," Hranica said. "The two of us have similar styles."

Once production on *Dead Throne* got into full swing, Dutkiewicz took an active role in helping shape the album's sound, and both Hranica and Rubey were pleased with his contributions.

"I loved everything Adam did," Hranica said. "He was a great help, as far as cutting songs in half, speeding things up, changing a drumbeat or adding a lead. I'm really happy with the songwriting and the engineering, the whole process. It was pretty hectic but, all told, I'd say *Dead Throne* is the best thing we could possibly do at this point in our career."

Hranica drew on tough personal experiences when crafting his lyrics, many of which address the pressing issue of idolatry in today's culture. Meanwhile, "Constance" touches on insomnia, while "R.I.T." is about dealing with depression.

"I always draw from daily life, and I was coming off the most difficult period in my life," he said. "Each song is very conceptual, though I wouldn't call this a concept album. A lot of the songs deal with idolatry. It doesn't get too preachy, though. It's presented as, 'I've made idols and these are my mistakes.' In a lot of ways, it's self-degrading. I like people to think up their own ideas from lyrics and build off them."

Hranica called the sound on *Dead Throne* more "progressive and evolved" and said fans should expect a different experience than they had with the extremely well-received *Zombie* EP, which debuted at No. 11 on the *Billboard* charts and garnered The Devil Wears Prada some of its strongest reviews to date.

"To us, the *Zombie* EP didn't seem like that big of a deal, but the fans and listeners loved it," he said. "The reaction was fantastic. I think part of it was the fact that it matched what we do live. We shot for that kind of heaviness. We decided to strive for a darker sound on the new album, while not having it be quite as blatant."

While listeners may find *Dead Throne* to be more melodic than its predecessors, Rubey said that may be because The Devil Wears Prada deliberately tried to delete nearly all semblances of melody from *Zombie* EP.

"I think the reason people would hear more melody on *Dead Throne* is because we consciously stayed away from those pretty melodic sections on *Zombie*," Rubey said. "I'm all about having a good balance between aggression and melody where it's needed. My favorite part while listening to music is when I hear a part that gives me goosebumps, and I get goosebumps from both heavy parts and beautiful singing parts. Everything has to be done in proper moderation. I think of every song as a roller coaster, and if you put all the loops at the beginning, people will get bored."

Many longtime Devil Wears Prada followers cried foul at *Dead Throne*'s catchy first single, "Born to Lose." Rubey said fans shouldn't be concerned, because the band's heavy roots are still evident on the album.

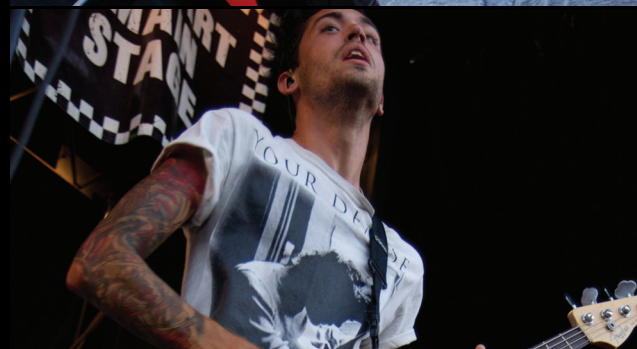
"On *Dead Throne*, I wanted to create a fusion and have us be one of those bands that gets better with time but maintains its identity," he said. "Every band I listened to growing up got less and less heavy with every release. We want to keep the heaviness intact."

The Devil Wears Prada may be packing out venues nationwide these days, but Hranica said he and his bandmates aren't letting the success go to their heads.

"We want people to know that we're really normal people," he said. "We're on a bus making music and touring for a living, but it's not extravagant. I'm not trying to be anyone's hero or idol, or to be their god. I'm trying to show people a good God. I'm only an instrument for His message."

Prayer remains a staple of the band's touring regimen, and Hranica said he feels blessed to be able to use The Devil Wears Prada as a vehicle for spreading the Word.

"We pray before every single show for strength to be able to make a strong representation and reflect God's goodness," he said. "Feeling God and being spiritual onstage is something that's natural for me. I feel very lucky to be able to do that."

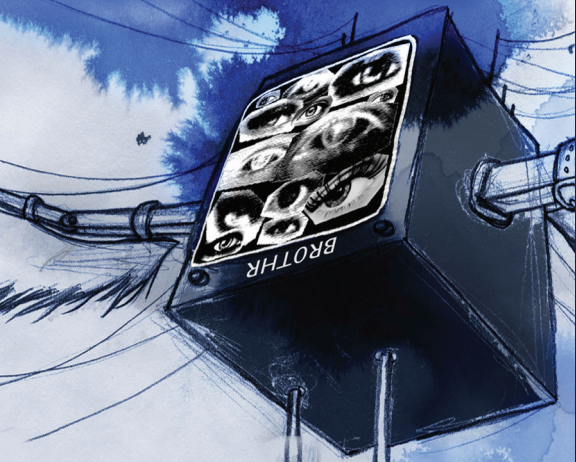


The Story of Our Lives by

THE VIOLET BURNING



- Doug Van Pelt,
editor HM MAGAZINE



"5 stars... it might easily be the best
album I have heard this decade."
Paul Gibson Editor, The Christian
Rock 20

"A + - ..lyrically profound
and sonically refreshing ...
significantly represents the
story of all our lives..."
-Ken Wiegman, Editor Alpha Omega
News

"...a masterpiece.."
-James F.

"...the best album The Violet Burning
has ever released."
-Untombed Network

one of the most critically
acclaimed albums of 2011

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THE VIOLET BURNING

THE STORY OF THE

I THINK I'VE MADE THE SAME MISTAKE AS DAVID LEE ROTH. NO, THIS HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH FRONTING A BAND AND THE INABILITY TO SING OR ANYTHING LIKE THAT (FOR THE RECORD, DLR CAN ACTUALLY CARRY A TUNE, WHICH IS SOMETHING THAT STILL ELUDES ME). NOPE, MY ONLY LINK TO THE GREATEST FRONTMAN VAN HALEN HAS EVER HAD (SORRY, SAMMY) IS THAT WE BOTH THOUGHT THAT THE MUSIC OF ONE MICHAEL PRITZL WAS THE FUTURE OF MUSIC. BACK IN 1990, WHEN THE FIRST VB ALBUM CAME OUT, THERE WAS A POPULAR PROPHECY CIRCULATING WITHIN THE CHRISTIAN MUSIC INDUSTRY CALLED "SONS OF THUNDER." IT PROPHESED THAT A FRESH NEW FORM OF MUSIC WOULD BE COMING FROM SOME ANOINTED MUSICIANS. THE BOLD MUSIC AND LOVESICK LYRICS DIRECTED TO GOD SURE SOUNDED LIKE MUSIC FROM HEAVEN TO THESE EARS. A LOT'S HAPPENED SINCE THEN, BUT THIS MUSICAL TROUBADOUR IS STILL PUSHING THE ENVELOPE. CASE IN POINT: A THREE-DISC MASTERPIECE CALLED *THE STORY OF OUR LIVES*. I'LL SHUT UP, THOUGH, AND LET MICHAEL TELL THE STORY (FUNKY SYMBOLS AND ALL).

BY DOUG VAN PELT



VIOLET BURNING

THEIR LIVES (AT LEAST THE PAST 3 YEARS)

How and why in the world did you embark on a 3-album project?

Michael Pritzl: Really, we wanted to raise the bar on ourselves. We are a small yet somehow influential band. About 3 years ago we had a big "come to Jesus" meeting. At that time we really encouraged each other to push ourselves into being even better musicians, to really practice hard every day, so that we could make something that would be truly special.

As a songwriter, I've long been in the habit of writing songs almost daily, and about 7 years ago I began writing songs towards a concept album. I began to show the songs to our drummer, Lenny Beh. We were really pushing each other to take them to the next level. We narrowed it down from about 45 songs to 34. Thinking that if we couldn't get 3 albums or 2 albums worth of great songs, we would at least be able to come up with 10 great songs!

Tell us the theme of the album. Feel free to break it down into sections to coincide with the album.

The Story of Our Lives is a concept album told in 3 parts. *The Story of Our Lives: Liebe über Alles, Black as Death and TH3 FANTA5T1C M^CH1N3*

TH3 FANTA5T1C M^CH1N3 is about any of us with the gifts we've been given in this life, and going out on the road home, which leads each of us through a messed up machine/system/Orwellian world. At the end of part one our character dies.

Black as Death is about loss, the beauty in brokenness, about splendor in the ruins of our lives, and pressing on.

Liebe über Alles: Having chosen death now the character lives on. Continuing their journey home. It's about choosing death to find life.

So much can be said about making a concept album.

We did our best to leave lots of clues in the artwork, the illustrations, the fine art photography and the design. The lyrics that are sung or the machine voices that are spoken all help to give away clues to the bigger picture. This is easily our most rock album and perhaps the loveliest. There are loads of contrasts ... the roar of Sabbath-like riffing guitars, the beauty of the

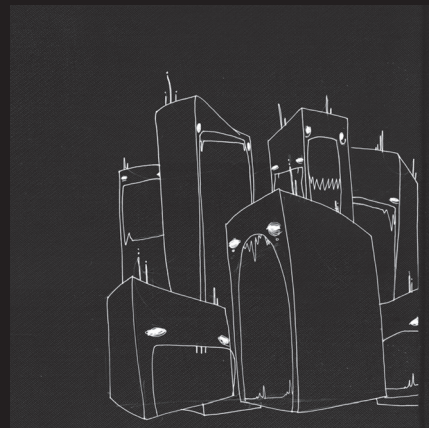
strings, the violins, the cellos, the melancholy rhythms and trances of the delay guitars, the hum and banging of actual factory machines from where I worked during most of the making of the recording. The lyrics that are sung or the machine voices that are spoken all help to give away clues to the bigger picture. There are themes both in the melodies and the lyrics that return on different songs and on different albums. You may hear a musical line on one song, that's actually a vocal melody on another song. Upon repeated listens there will be quite a few themes that appear both musically and lyrically.

The outstanding illustrations that show so much of the details of the journey through part one and the incredible fine art photography that sets the tone in the black and white ruins for part two and in the gorgeous full-color fine art photography for part three.

I tend to write about the things I do know about. Love, loss, death, hope, faith, technology, the media, our culture. Since I spend most of my life around people, I tend to observe what's happening in our lives. A great book had a big influence on the albums as well, *The Big Switch* by Nicholas Carr. The album also tips our hats to Nikolai Tesla, Pink Floyd, et al.

The villain in Part One, "br0thr" speaks the language of the world system around us. With promises of "because you are worth it," "we are everywhere you want to be," "you belong here," "making tomorrow better," "wherever you go, our network follows" and "healthier, greener" and "just do it!" and so on...

To be accurate, I had to touch on most things that we all know and are aware of in the Western world. Which would include, the church and a music industry as a small part, but also on the bigger level must include the whole world corporate system and structure, corporations, media, news drama, billboards, etc. To leave out the church would be unfair – especially as some churches have followed the world trends for decades, and many evangelicals still do. To be clear, there is a big picture that the story is pointing at, and I'm doing my best to include all things that relate to our lives in the machines / systems of our daily lives and our journey outside the machine.



We've been humbled by the response from fans and critics and even some of our own musical big brothers like The Choir, OJO Taylor, or the legendary guitar technologist/sound master Pete Cornish have reached out to congratulate us on *The Story of Our Lives*. I was stunned to get an email from Pete expressing his love of the guitar sounds and the production and asking me if I wouldn't mind taking the time to go song by song and describe how I tracked each of the guitar sounds. It's all been quite humbling for us.

On this album my dear friend and drummer/violinist/collaborator, Lenny Beh put in world class performances on the drums and on the violins. The power and emotion of the drumming just slays me. I've honestly not heard a drummer put in that kind of performance since Velvet Revolver's Matt Sorum. Really, we were going for a Bill Ward/Ian Paice kind of thing.

Jeff Schroeder of Smashing Pumpkins played a few face/heart melting leads on 3 songs. Other great musicians/friends Paul Stebner, Daryl Dawson, Eleanor Beh, Marnie Stebner, Kevin Buhler... all contributed great things to the album and have been joining us for the live shows and for parts of the album.

By the time this goes to press we will be on tour in the U.S. and Canada. We can't wait. It will be so great to get back out (and) to be among our fans and friends in the U.S. and Canada. Be sure to check thevioletburning.com for tour dates in your area, and, of course, you can follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

For fun, walk us through the entire career of the Violet Burning (even share some pre-VB band history if there is some). Please stop to at least comment on each studio album you've released, if not much more.

Well, it's kind of fun to look back at growing up playing music and growing as an artist. It's amazing how God allows so many blessings in our lives... Before 1990 I was just learning to play music. I think an interesting story is that my first band as a kid was The Children. We had a great little following. I remember one night playing at The Troubadour in LA, and for the encore we did a version of Bowie's "Ziggy Stardust."

After the show a small man with 2 bodyguards approached the stage as we were cleaning up our gear and the club was emptying. "I've seen the future of rock 'n' roll and you are it!!!" As I looked down from the stage at this short fellow (shorter than me if you can imagine), and there is David Lee Roth, then singer of Van Halen and his 2 bodyguards pretty much holding him back from hugging me...



1990 – our first album, *Chosen* was released in March/April of that year. We had spent most of our time as a band playing in the clubs of Los Angeles and Orange County, and one night a few pastors from different churches came to see us. A couple from the church that my brother-in-law and I attended and another from our friend's church. During that season we would often perform "The Killing" live, and at some point I would end up with my shirt off and red paint all over my hands, face and body, singing, "Oh, they're killing my Lord." God always used those strange moments to really sober up the bars/clubs and often times many of us there would all be in tears... I remember that evening that the "pastors" all came into the club. One set of pastors told us we were "leading people into sin" for being there in the clubs and the other set of pastors that included Randy Rigby was different. I remember Randy saying, "That was the most amazing thing I've ever seen. You need to keep doing what God has made you to do... This is incredible." That night was the first time I had seen or met Randy. He had a huge impact on our lives, being the first church leader to acknowledge and bless us and speak encouragement to us. Shortly after that we began recording some demos with Randy at his church and, though soon after that the politics of church led Randy away from us, he was really the catalyst for what would become *Chosen*. Highlights include "The Killing," "Rise Like the Lions," "There is Nowhere Else."

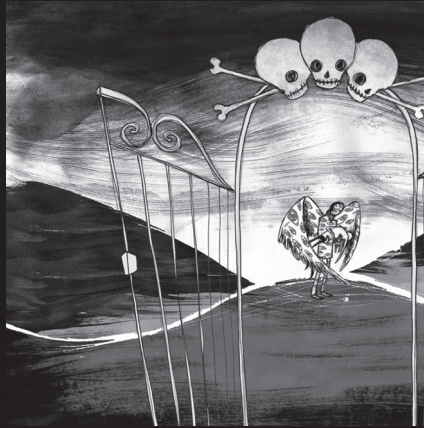
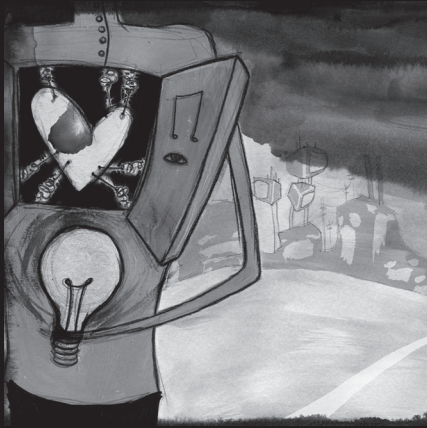


1993 – *Strength* was finally released. We finished in 1992 and wanted to reunite with our friend Randy Rigby who was now in Denver, CO, with Tom Stipe at Crossroads Church of Denver. After a few months

of asking Vineyard Music to let us go, they finally worked something out with Tom and Randy, and we were able to realign ourselves with men who shared our vision for the lost and for sharing the modern day psalms that *Strength* became known for. It's quite humbling to look back at that time. Many great artists have shared with me that *Strength* was the catalyst that helped them see that they could do worship/psalms that were current and relevant in music. I've been told by greats like Martin Smith, Stu Gerrard, Tim Hughes, Matt Redman and others that *Strength* was the album that turned everything upside down for them and perhaps pioneered a path that helped them go on... Highlights include "There is No One Like You," "Undone," "As I Am," "Song of the Harlot." Live Highlights from this era include some incredible late night shows at Cornerstone Festival... Wow.

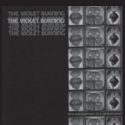


1996 – *The Violet Burning*. The self-titled album was released on a mainstream independent label. Co-produced by the legendary Steve Hindalong and I. What could I say about this album? It seems to me that it speaks for itself – the great drumming of Lonnie Tubbs, the triple guitar assault of Jeff Schroeder, Andy Prickett and myself, the steady and solid bass playing of Jason Pickersgill. At the time we were pretty much ousted from the Christian music market, because we had signed to a mainstream label and rumors about this "dark" album that we had made spread like wildfire. We had actually been officially "handed over to Satan" by a certain movement; who shared with us that, to show "true repentance," we would have to stop the release of this "dark" album. When I asked the pastor who was telling me this if he had heard the album yet (because in those days it was all on tapes and none of us even had a copy of it at that time) the pastor responded with, "We have it on a good authority that this is a very dark album..." Well, the handful of fans who don't believe everything they hear that bought the album were in for a treat. A deeper and perhaps more spiritual album that easily rivals *Strength* in its desperation and even the many psalms that came out of that album. "Goldmine," "Underwater," "Low," "Crush" are some of the highlights. A highlight from touring self-titled was meeting Cindy Lauper at a club in NYC. "Nice to meetcha Michael. I've heard a lot about chyou..." smiling with her East Coast accent.



1998 – *Demonstrates Plastic and Elastic*. The first of 3 albums that we made with the great engineer Anthony Arvizu. What began as 4-track demos on a cassette player and later some 16-track demos at my friend Mike Misiuk's studio and later finished by Anthony and I in Long Beach, became hailed by some Los Angeles/OC journalists as "the new new wave." We first brought this album to a distributor to see if they would release it across America. They were troubled by our tattoos and the artwork that we had selected. The great photographer Anna Cardenas (owner of the Green Room Studio) had really understood the vision of the album to show the plastic (outer appearance) parts of our lives, contrasted with the elastic (the inside of who we are that gets stretched and somehow survives the challenges of life). So Anna had taken all of these extreme photos, and we had eyeliner on and kind of an over-the-top Bowie-esque kind of rock look to some of the photos. Heck, we were right on the cutting edge of the LA music scene...

Of course, the church always follows a few years behind, so the distributor we met with actually cleared the room and asked me to stay. "Don't you realize that we can't release an album with these kind of photos?" And, "We need you to cover the tattoos." And then the killer statement that you hear mentioned on the new *Story of Our Lives* album, "Michael, if you would just say Jesus a few more times in your lyrics, you and I would make A LOT of money!!!" He pleaded with me behind closed doors. Highlights include: "Elaste," "Gorgeous," "Berlin Kitty," "Moon Radio," "Oceana." Live highlights from this era would really be our return to many of the clubs around Long Beach and Orange County, playing to some great fans at home.



2000 – *Faith and Devotions of a Satellite Heart*. A couple friends of ours, Scott Malone and Carl Tuttle, had approached me about doing a congregational

worship album for their new record label. As a songwriter I have long been in the habit of writing almost daily and, of course, I'm always sitting on lots of strong worship songs, so I really jumped at the chance. I believe that God has made us with 2 feet, 1 foot to be a blessing to the church and another to be a blessing to

the world around us. John Wimber taught me a lot about loving the church, the whole church. It was a great opportunity that I'm not often given to do something just for the church. Also recorded by Anthony Arvizu, *Satellite Heart* is yet another of the classic Violet Burning albums. Though this time we tried to keep it as stripped-down as possible, not doing too many loops or recording gags, that were popular at the time in worship music. We were aiming more towards the worship leader who may not have the same tools to create loops and rhythms at that time in 2000, though today those things are in everyone's bedrooms. At that time we wanted to be sure that someone with an acoustic guitar could pick up the songs and play them. Highlights: "Invitacion Fountain," "Clean," "Forty Weight," "The Blood of Jesus," "Shine Your Light."

[**Pick up the historical description in 2001 on the huge, expanded VB feature online at hmmag.com]

If you could go back and change certain times, certain decisions, certain songs, whatever, what would you tweak?

Well, the truth is that you can't really change the past and you can only make the best choices given the options you have in front of you. As an artist you want to be true to what God has brought you through, and you hope that if you are faithful to express the art from that deepest place within you that somehow it will touch the heart of God and also touch those who hear it. As our fans have been hearing me say since the early '90s, the Bible is certainly no children's book. It's full of the struggles and challenges of men and women and the God who inserts Himself into their story. That's what makes the Bible so incredible. It relates so much to each of us and the challenges, blessings, curses, loves, losses that life brings us, and through it all is the One True God inserting Himself into our stories, into the story of our lives.

Looking back on it all, I think that we've been blessed to have so many who have helped us through the years, people who helped us to sound better than we were, who helped guide us and lead us as best they knew how, and we've made the best of the good and the challenging.

What is your perspective on the changing role of working musician in 2011? What are the most impacting changes you've felt?

These are great questions, and we certainly don't have them figured out. There's lots of great opportunities for artists right now. And things are changing very fast. I think what's sad is that artists and music have both had their value diminished by the culture. The ideas that music is now worth an "email" address, or worth "whatever you want to pay" has created a flood of mediocrity in music, in quality sound recordings, and I think they've run their course. I don't know how many of us actually need more emails coming to us from a band, a company, a church, etc. I think the best thing an artist can do is to find a great producer and a great recording engineer to help them capture their songs in an outstanding way. I don't understand how someone can pour their hearts, souls and feelings into writing/creating a song and then capture the song on their laptop or with some low quality microphone, because they've bought a Microphone Emulation Plugin that's gonna make their voice sound like they're actually singing on a great vintage microphone. REALLY? Are those ears on the side of your head? And why not find a producer to help you really capture the best performances? So many musicians hurt themselves by not investing in their art and music. There's about 1,000 albums coming out every month. How is it that you're gonna stand out from the rest of the flood of mediocrity? People are looking for great music that will touch their souls.



[See more of this interview,** along with a more-detailed breakdown of *The Story of Our Lives* at hmmag.com]

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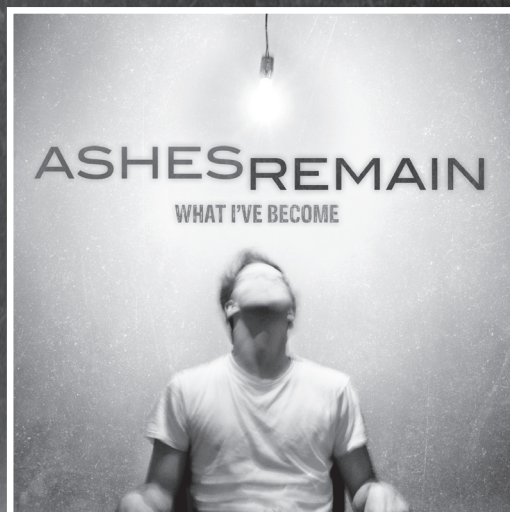


ASHES REMAIN

WHAT I'VE BECOME

Whoever said that you can't have an emotional, impassioned rock album hasn't experienced that of Ashes Remain, and I say experienced because it's more than just a listen, it's the journey this record takes you through, and the moving feelings it draws out. By the end, you will more than likely feel redefined and cleansed, and ready to push repeat on your player.

— *ChristianMusicReview.org*



**FEATURING "COME ALIVE"
AND "EVERYTHING GOOD"**



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What Anthrax Says

THERE ARE ONLY FOUR BANDS IN THE WORLD GIVEN THE REVERED COLLECTIVE LABEL AS ONE OF “THE BIG FOUR.” IT MUST HAVE BEEN AMAZING FOR THE NEW YORK CITY-BORN AND RAISED MEMBERS OF ANTHRAX TO TAKE THE STAGE AT YANKEE STADIUM LAST WEEK FOR A GIANT OUTDOOR SHOW WITH METALLICA, MEGADETH AND SLAYER. THERE’S ALSO ANOTHER IMPORTANT DETAIL THAT MAKES THIS EVENT EVEN BETTER FOR THE BAND—THEY’VE JUST RELEASED A KILLER THRASH METAL ALBUM THAT FINDS THEM AS GOOD AS EVER (I’D ARGUE THAT THE IRONICALLY TITLED *WORSHIP MUSIC* ALBUM IS THE BEST OF THEIR CAREER). WHEN I HAD A CHANCE TO TALK TO SONGWRITERS CHARLIE BENANTE (DRUMS) AND SCOTT IAN (GUITAR) ON THE PHONE FOR AN INTERVIEW, I COULDN’T SAY NO.



Anthrax LR: Frank Bello, Scott Ian, Charlie Benante, Rob Caggiano, Joey Belladonna. (Photo by Matthew Rodgers)

*In the last 10 years, there's been two albums with metal bands that've come back and really killed it with their core, original sound and excellent tunes that kick (bleep). One of those was 2004's *Unbreakable* by Scorpions. The second was called *Infestation* by Ratt. I would count *Worship Music* as one of those. How do you account for the energy, the chemistry and the character of these songs? It's very exciting.*

Charlie Benante: I'd say that this record was a very cathartic experience that we've had in the past three years ... and it came out in the art. We didn't want to compete with any other form of music. What I mean is that we didn't want to sound like anyone else but ourselves. There's so many bands that are just trying to capture what other bands are doing, and it just doesn't work. This was just us—just sounding like Anthrax again. I mean, Joey played a big part of it. His sound on the record is awesome.

Scott Ian: (laughs) I guess just a lot of hard work. We just spent a lot of time working and reworking a lot of this record. We had the luxury of being able to... If there's one silver lining of finishing a record and then shelving it and then going back in and reopening it up and listening to it was we were able to spend more time than we ever had on a batch of songs, just making sure they were gonna be exactly what we wanted them to be at the end of the day.

Tell me about one example of maybe how one song got deconstructed and put back together.

SI: The song “In The End” on the record was something that was pretty much a song in progress going all the way back to 2007 all the way up until May of this year. It actually got rerecorded twice, because we just kept coming up with a better chorus. It took a long time, but it was worth it. From where it was in 2009 to where it is now is just head and shoulders better than it was. Whereas in 2009 it might have not even made the finished album and so where it is now it's probably my favorite song on the record.

Awsome. Well, again, job well done, dude!

SI: Thank you.

*What role did you play in crafting the songs for *Worship Music*?*

SI: I co-write everything—musically—and I wrote almost all of the lyrics.

Break it down for me. What's it practically like for you? Do you use a tape machine? How does it go from A to Z?

SI: I don't use anything. I get ideas, and when I'm in the room with Charlie and Frankie, I get ideas and I just throw 'em out there. With lyrics, I just start writing stuff once we get into it. I just get ideas and I start writing stuff down.

*Charlie, what role did you play in crafting the songs for *Worship Music*?*

CB: The same as I've always played. Someone comes in with the idea of the song and, you know, back when we were writing this record, it was just me, Scott and Frankie in the rehearsal room. The ideas were flowing. This is kind of similar to the way we wrote *Spreading the Disease*. We didn't have a singer in mind and we were just making songs.

What are some of the directions you might've given to your band members when putting these songs together? Share with us some stories or insight on something you guys did that's unique or might be unique as far as something other bands don't do or you take for granted and found out that other bands don't do in the studio.

CB: That's just it. We really didn't push to be like anything but Anthrax. It was just a very organic experience. It was just, “Okay, here's what we sound like! We'll keep it that way.” The

hardest part was not having a singer in mind when these songs were being written. In my head I always hear either Joey singing these songs or John singing these songs. So that was something that ... when Joey sang these songs, "Oh my God! There it is! There is that Anthrax sound."

Sometimes the drummer has the best seat in the house... How are these new songs sounding live?

CI: (repeating the phrase) "Sometimes the drummer has the best seat in the house." That is pretty good. I like that. Well, we've only played one song live – that's "Fight 'em 'til You Can't" and the funny thing about that song is I play that song as if I was playing "Caught in a Mosh." It's so familiar, and it just fit right in. It wasn't even a question of trying to make it fit. It just automatically just fit in – as if we'd been playing it forever. That is the sign of a really good song. And, when your fans expect that song right away as if it was part of your set, that's the sign of a really good song...

Sometimes when religious people see a pentagram, they freak out, as if there's some sort of superstitious, evil power embodied in that symbol. What is your take on the pentagram and what sort of thought processes did you guys go through in choosing that visual for the *Worship Music* album art?

SI: Well, it's not a pentagram. If you look at it, it's an "A."

Yeah.

SI: So, besides that I just think pentagrams look cool. As far as what people care about them or what they mean or anything, I really don't care. I just like the way they look. (laughs) But ours is actually an "A" in the shape of, but it's actually, we call it our Anthrax-agram.

The A kind of glows. You can see it kind of pops out of it. Why the title *Worship Music*?

SI: Because we think it's something worth worshipping.

CB: That's pretty deep – the whole *Worship Music* title. *Worship Music* means this: if you're a heavy metal fan or a hard rock fan, you have a group of bands that you love, and you will buy everything from those bands and you will go see those bands at any time, and it's a form of worship. I don't mean it in way that ... in a bad way, but this is like your faith. It's a religious type of thing. You flock to these bands and you just can't help it. That's how I am with a lot of music that I love. I worship music. It helps me through bad times. It excites me. It does everything. The title *Worship Music* has a real deep meaning and I think that all the fans can really understand what I mean by that.

I think you're right. On a related note, what do you think of Jesus Christ?

CB: What do I think of Jesus Christ? Well, I grew up Catholic. I still consider myself Catholic. I think in the past 20 years people have gotten a little (stretches out word to emphasize amount) ... um, I don't want to say, "smarter about religion," but I think people just have realized that... Hmmm ... are starting to figure this whole thing out. Of course, when you're a child growing up, you have these beliefs and your parents do, so you're just put in the same religion as they are, of course, but I am a believer that there is something higher. I

believe in God, so that's my whole take on it.

SI: What do I think of Jesus Christ? I don't even know how to answer that question. No comment.

What do you think about His claims to be "the Way, the Truth and the Life. No one comes to the Father but by Me?"

CB: Ahh, you're getting really, really, really, you know, deep into the whole religion thing right now, and it's not something that I want my views, you know, put out there. Like I told ya, I believe in God, and I'll leave it at that.

SI: I don't think about it.

Your band has a legacy of sorts in the thrash metal scene. How difficult or how much pressure do you put on yourselves to outdo your previous efforts?

SI: None at all. We just do what we do. It's not something we ever even think about. When it comes time to write songs, we just start writing. I don't ever go into it with some kind of goal in mind or anything like that, as far as outdoing something we've done before. Every time we write a record we try to do the best we can in that time period – you know, write the best songs we can write at that time. It's not a case of comparing to what we've done before or anything like that.

CB: In the past we've probably taken more of a chance musically. This time we just kind of did what we felt, and, like I said, it just came out. It came out this way. There was no, "I wanna write a song like that! Oh, this is gonna be this way." Like I said, it was just an organic thing. That's exactly the way this music came out.

Looking back at the formative years of thrash and speed metal scenes, what are some of the things that initially excited you about the new genre or style as it was emerging?

SI: We didn't know what it was then. We didn't know it was a new style. We were just playing music (laughs) that we enjoyed playing. But yeah, we had no idea. It wasn't until at some point people started calling it thrash metal or speed metal. We just thought we were a heavy metal band. That's all we knew.

What were some of your influences?

SI: Wow. Maiden, Priest, Motorhead, Venom, Anvil. I'm talking like way early on. I'm drawing a blank in my brain right now. AC/DC, Black Sabbath. A lot of the obvious stuff. I mean, that's all we were listening to: Thin Lizzy, The Ramones.

How did you feel about the then-emerging audience activity? Kind of like what you'd see at a hardcore punk show all of a sudden happening in the metal community, like moshing and slam dancing and stuff.

SI: It was fun. I used to go to hardcore shows at CBGB's all the time in '83, '84, '85 – way before there was any stage diving or slam dancing at metal shows. In New York around 1985 I remember we played a show at the old Ritz on 11th Street. We headlined, and that was the first time we ever had a circle pit and stage diving at an Anthrax show, and the reason for that is we had invited tons of our friends from the hardcore scene from CBGB's. We put 'em on the guest list and invited 'em to the

show, and they started that so the metalheads just kind of started joining in. I'm not certainly taking any credit for anything like that, but that was the first time I ever saw it at a metal show.

What was going on in your head when you saw it from the stage?

SI: I thought it was awesome.

What do you think are your best Anthrax songs ever? Why?

CB: (laughs) I don't know. There's different reasons why I would choose certain songs that they would probably disagree with me, but there's a reason why I like certain songs. If I had to take a song off *Spreading the Disease*, I'd probably take "A.I.R." and "Madhouse," because it would take me back to a time and a place. If I had to choose *Among the Living*, of course, there's "Caught in a Mosh." Each night that song gets me excited. After all these years of playing it, it never gets dull for me. It's always exciting, you know? There's moments on other records that have caused to get me going all the time. There's a song on *White Noise* called "Room for One More." I love that song. It's great. So, yeah, there's elements on all of our records that, to me, have significant meaning.

SI: I don't know. I don't listen to our records. I don't know if that surprises people. I don't know many guys in bands that listen to their own band. You're so close to them for so long that, by the time you finish a record and then certainly go out and tour and play those songs, I don't even go home and sit and listen to my own records. I think that would be kind of goofy. I certainly love playing songs live. There's stuff off *Among the Living* that I think is kind of timeless. Songs like "Indians," "Caught in a Mosh," "I Am The Law," like certainly "Madhouse" off *Spreading the Disease*. I'm trying to think of songs that I feel like will always be in the set. I'd like to think some songs off this new record, like "Fight 'em 'til You Can't" or "In The End" or "Earth on Hell" are songs that will always be on the set from this time on. Obviously, I don't know yet, but I'd like to think so.

What are some of the greatest moments in Anthrax history?

SI: Ah, we don't even have time to go into that one (laughs). These kind of blunt questions are stuff I don't have the easy answer to. I don't know. The Big Four shows! That's off the top of my head, because it's the most recent thing. I'll claim the Big Four shows.

CB: Getting a record deal (laughs). Great moment. Seeing someone wear our t-shirt for the first time and thinking that you made it, ya know? That's such a significant thing – when you see someone, not necessarily at a show – what I'm talking about is when you see someone in public at some function or another, you see them walking around the street with your shirt, and you almost want to go over to them and hug them and say, "Thank you," but you can't because you'll look like an idiot. But these are significant things that have always stood out to me. You've arrived. You've made it. I tell you one thing that we are totally looking forward to. It's probably one of the biggest things that's ever happened to us is playing Yankee Stadium.

I bet.

CB: Words just can't even describe the feeling of that.

Just the anticipation alone.

I wish I could stand next to you when you walk out on stage for that.

CB: It's gonna be crazy. It's gonna be huge. It has a huge emotional value – especially for myself.

The Big Four. What's it like being named with Metallica, Megadeth and Slayer?

CB: Awesome. Awesome. Three great bands. I can find something in every one of those bands that I still love, you know

I agree with ya. How did it feel to the rest of you guys when Dan Spitz left the band?

CB: Well, Dan... Danny had some health issues, and, you know, that's one of the reasons... For me, I don't really like to talk about it. I love Danny. Danny's awesome.

SI: He was asked to leave the band in 1995, so it was our decision.

If there was a price, how much money would it take for you to shave the goatee?

SI: I don't know. I've never thought about it.

I have heard that Led Zeppelin was playing in upstate New York the same week as Woodstock, but let's imagine that Led Zeppelin actually played that festival. What would be the results of when they played "Dazed and Confused" for 29 minutes? What do you think that would have been like?

SI: No idea (laughs).

I asked Charlie what would have happened if Black Sabbath played Woodstock. I've often imagined that, because they were around then. I think it would have destroyed all the hippies and the flowers

"...how could they break up? What about playing live? Didn't that mean anything to them? Why didn't they stick it out and do this?"

what I mean?

SI: I just love... It's great to be a part of. None of us came up with the "Big Four." That was something coined by an American writer back in the '80s. That's not anything that we ever came up with, but to be a part of it is awesome. It's great.

How have those shows gone?

CB: Completely amazing. Of course, not every show is gonna be the same. It doesn't have the same intensity for some reason or another, but for the most part the shows have that intensity and that feeling of, you know, camaraderie.

SI: Awesome. Every (single) one has been great. It's an amazing thing to be a part of.

I saw that simulcast in a movie theater of like an Eastern European show. It was pretty energetic and crazy. It was pretty awesome.

CB: Oh yeah, yeah. That was the Bulgarian show. Awesome.

Speaking of the Big Four, Joey's voice brings something to the table that the other three don't have – the melodic singing voice. It's great. Let's talk about that.

SI: Joey's a great singer! (laughs) What do you want me to say? He's awesome. He's a great singer and I guess you could say that, from our formative years, when we were looking for a singer back before *Spreading the Disease* was finished we wanted a singer more in the vein of a Halford or a Dickinson, because those other bands – Tom was already doing his thing and James was doing his thing and Dave was doing his thing and we were more from the school of we wanted more of a singer, I guess, to be able to support the ideas that we had in our head and started writing like so. Which, I guess, is one of the things that made us sound different than those bands back in 1984.

CB: Joey's always had that. That's one of the key ingredients that set us apart from the other three bands. We always said that was probably one of the biggest differences from the other three bands. On this record it's apparent. Joey (bleep) sings his (bleep) off on this record. He just sounds... I think he sounds better today than he did back then.

I remember reading a press release that your label or you guys released post-9/11 about the Anthrax scare and all that. What sort of experiences did you guys in the band experience around that time due to your name?

SI: I don't even remember! I don't know. I don't even remember, truthfully. I remember there was a lot of people that wanted to talk to us about it. We didn't give a (bleep), because we didn't have anything to do with any of that, obviously, other than the fact that we just so happened to be named after Anthrax. We just realized after all these years, I guess you could say we've been renting the name? Other than that, I don't know. It's not like we were going to change or name or anything like that.

I've got a fun question. Let's mess with history a little bit. It's 1969. We've got a time machine and we're going to take Black Sabbath, and we're gonna put 'em on stage at Woodstock. How does that go down and what's the impact?

CB: Wow! (pauses) I'll do you better than that. We had this conversation when we were in Europe just recently. I had this conversation with some of the guys and Chris Jericho. Chris and I are huge Beatles fans. And Andreas, from Sepultura, said that... We think the Beatles are the greatest thing, and Andreas was the first person to say anything negative. And he said, "They broke up, but how could they break up? What about playing live? Didn't that mean anything to them? Why didn't they stick it out and do this?" I had never heard anybody put it that way before. He was saying that the Beatles were starting to leave the stage and just make studio records so that they could perfect – so that they could put so much on a record that they could never reproduce it live. And I was like, "Wow!" Of course, there's a ton of truth to that, and I said, "What if the Beatles did stay together? What if the Beatles had done Woodstock? What would that have been like? You know, because in 1969, they were already out of the *Sgt. Pepper* stuff and they were *White Album* and *Let It Be*, so they would have been a totally different band at Woodstock. You would have heard songs like "Revolution" played live, and it would've been (bleep) crazy!

Hmmm. That is pretty awesome.

CB: It's something to chew on, ya know what I mean? Sabbath at Woodstock? That could have been a revelation.

in the fields would have wilted.

SI: (laughs) I don't know, though. They were pretty hippie-ish themselves – even at that point, even though they certainly turned into the antithesis of that in a way, but at that time there was a lot of jamming going on.

One more question about the history of metal and stuff. What do you think are some of the best years in metal?

SI: There's different periods, I guess. The late '70s and into the early '80s. The mid-'80s, certainly, because of the bands that came out of those scenes.

Let's talk about the genre of music that's roughly called "screamo" and how a lot of these bands they borrow some chugging-chugging breakdowns... What are your thoughts on that style of music and today's modern music?

CB: Ummm... (draws word out). I don't know what to say about that. There's bands out there that I like and then there's bands that I do not give a (bleep) about, because I think they're all contrived, and it's just fake to me. Basically, all that screamo thing, if it's still as big as it once was, but it never really was my thing. I think the greatest record that came out that had that screaming on it was The Refused record *The Shape of Punk to Come*. That, to me, is probably the be all/end all of that.

Yep. Good choice. Well, is there anything else you'd like to talk about?

CB: No, I think we pretty much hit on everything.

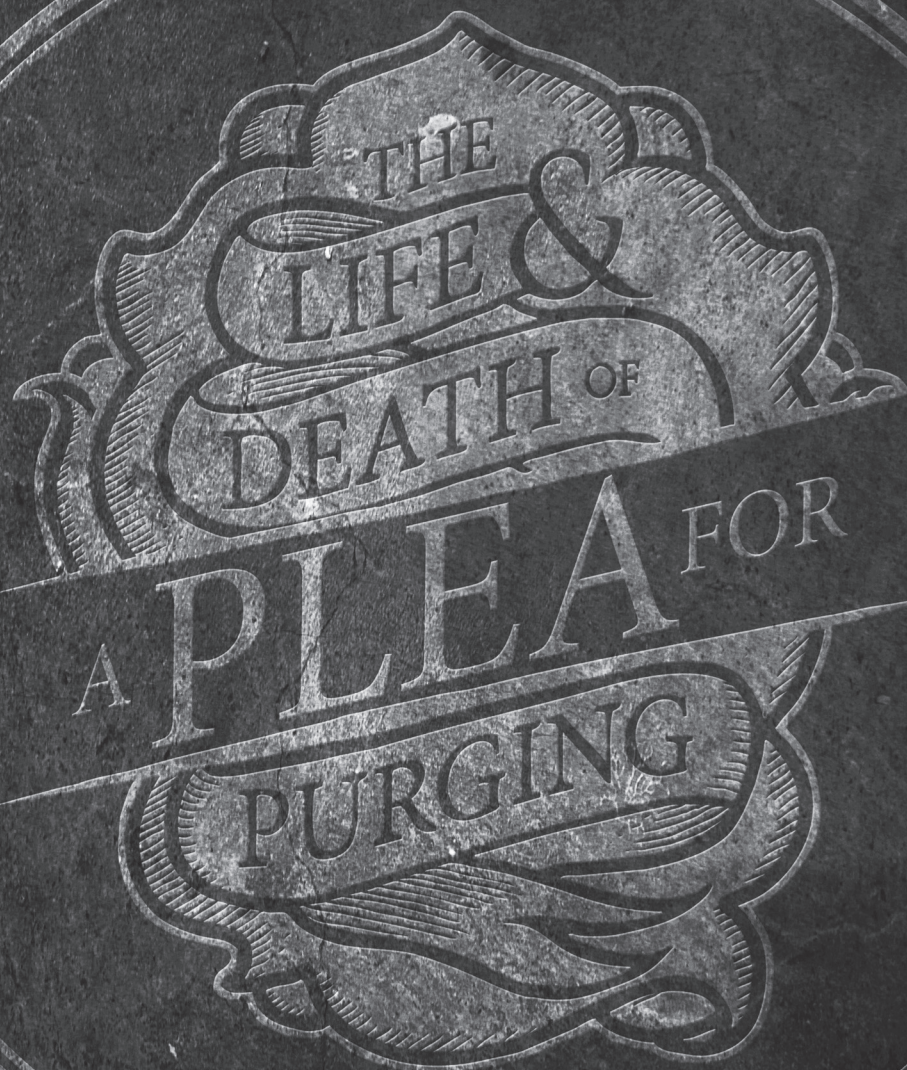
SI: I'm just really, really excited for people to hear this record. It's been a long time, and I just can't wait for everybody to get to hear it.

Cool. Me, too. I think it's going to go real well for you. Again, I think it's a fantastic album.

SI: Awesome! Thank you.

CB: Thank you. If there's anything else and you want to do a catch-up, we could always do that. Yeah, I appreciate it.





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Album reviews

49 ALBUMS 59 ENTERTAINMENT, BOOKS & GADGETS



THRICE MAJOR/MINOR

*If Thrice constructed last year's *Beggars* with a hammer and nails, then this album was built with a sledge and railroad spikes. *Major/Minor* takes all the great things about *Beggars*, streamlines them, removing the unnecessary cogs and comes back with a finished project that is more efficient and interesting, without sacrificing those key heavy moments.*

Major/Minor's density resonates back to 2005's *Vheissu*, with its blend of ambience and aggression, but rather than thunderous anthems like "The Earth Will Shake" this time they've honed in on their tone and dynamics. "Call It In the Air" slowly builds into a huge chorus that only gets bigger towards the bridge. "Blur," is driven by Riley's percussion and is easily the heaviest track on the album, if not the heaviest track the band has written since 2007.

Single, "Yellow Belly" starts the album off with a rugged funk that will continue to resound throughout the album while "Promises" goes on to dissect the responsibility of relationships, expanding on the themes from *Beggars'* "The Weight," with Dustin belting, "We are cowards and thieves, will we never turn to grieve the damage done? Never see, never quake with rage at what we have become?"

What keeps Thrice refreshing is Dustin, Ed, Riley and Teppei's desire to write the music they want, rather than jumping on popular trends. Up to now, that attitude showed in the jarring shifts between each album. Now, with seven full-length albums to draw from, Thrice has identified exactly what worked for each release and bound that knowledge into an eighth, monumental release that is easily the most natural progression since *Artist in the Ambulance*.

In the nearly fifteen years they've been writing music, *Major/Minor* is Thrice at their best.
[VAGRANT] NATHAN DOYLE

Rating system

- 05 CLASSIC
- 04 FABULOUS
- 03 SOLID
- 02 SUSPECT
- 01 AMISS
- * 1/2



THE DEVIL WEARS PRADA

DEAD THRONE

Dead Throne is deadly serious. You won't find songs like "HTML rulz d00d," or "Swords, Dragons, and Diet Coke" on TDWP's fourth full-length. Instead, you'll find songs like "Mammoth" and "Vengeance" that are fashioned with an approachable song structure and everything. Don't get me wrong; this album is plenty heavy, tragically epic from start to finish. But there is less dissonance, hardly any mathematical/time signature alterations and a strong focus on creating dark, sweeping melodies and more catchy choruses. Think early Hopesfall (but more doom and less breakdowns), because this record is packed with just as much emotion. A real upper with beautiful substance, they seem to be relying less on digital sampling and more on songwriting and instrumentation. "My Questions" is a hard-hitting track that really delivers with standout guitar work that reminds me of Fall of Troy. "Kansas" is a slow, emotive instrumental track. "Constance" actually features some memorable guest vocals from Tim Lambesis, which turns out to be quite singable. Overall, I think this record was less fun, but in a really scary, melody-focused way.

[FERRET] JASON SLAJCHERT



MUTEMATH

ODD SOUL

For an act that doesn't consider itself a "Christian rock" band, they sure do sing about Jesus, faith, healing and signs a lot on this album. Turns out the remaining members of MUTEMATH have turned introspective and shared some of the questions, observations and stories of things they've marveled at in their own Christian upbringing. Tunes like "Blood Pressure" and "songtitle" adroitly put the listener in the shoes of the vulnerable band members as they wrestle with some slightly twisted spiritual issues. This being the first album without the departed guitar and pedalboard wizard Greg Hill, MUTEMATH does a great job of not lowering their creative bar. Turns out bassist Roy Mitchell-Cárdena is no slouch on the six-string, either, as he and the band wrote some decidedly rawer and more organic rock than ever before. They haven't quite reinvented themselves nor ditched their distinct sound, but it's quite less ethereal while as energetic as ever. Having said that, "Sunray" and "Allies" could easily segue right into "Reset" in concert. Most definitely not a step down for the band by any means, but a step sideways ... heck, it's really just a funky new dance!

[TELEPROMPT/WMB] DOUG VAN PELT



SWITCHFOOT

VICE VERSES

Sometimes formulas get a bad name. Somehow rock critics seem to think it is the job of a rock band to constantly reinvent themselves and change their sound. Switchfoot has developed a slick, powerful, thoughtful brand of music that stirs the soul, challenges the mind and moves the feet. Fortunately their eighth studio album, *Vice Verses*, demonstrates that they are happy being one of the best rock bands going and feel no need for major renovations. In broad strokes this is a classic Switchfoot collection. It boasts insanely catchy riffs and powerful vocals with accessible sing-along lyrics that dare to inspire. Top-drawer production is expected and delivered. Front man Jon Foreman's vocals and Drew Shirley's epic guitar chops duel it out throughout a dozen flawless tracks. But closer inspection reveals a trove of truly transcendent lyrical and musical themes that make *Vice Verses* the best all-around Switchfoot disc in several years. Long desiring to create music for "thinking people," Foreman and company do not fail this time out. It's uncanny how these guys blend fist-pumping slogans with soul-searching, theological meditations on the nature of sin and self, juxtaposed with modern cultural toxicity. Foreman turns his deeply felt and holy discontent into poetry that rides over irresistible modern rock textures and ambient chill moments. *Vice Verses* may not be recommended for people satisfied with canned Christianity or mindless worldviews. Each song explores a different lie or personal challenge and dares to take on the most sacred of cows; from faulty eschatology to right-wing infonography, in a way that will sail right over the head of the oblivious but land square in the gut of any Christ follower who is truly concerned with maintaining the mind and heart of Jesus in this upside-down world and myopic church. Foreman is scary good and Switchfoot is incredible. If all faith-fueled music was this emotionally passionate, intellectually honest and spiritually transcendent all apologies for "Christian Rock" would end immediately.



FAREWELL FLIGHT

OUT FOR BLOOD

At first listen, *Out For Blood* reverberates trickling endorphins against your eardrums, leaving you feeling curiously jolly with the inclusion of light-hearted musical stylings. However, upon intent observation of the lyrics and layers of background vocals, one begins to notice an almost morbid sense of honesty. Farewell Flight exploits all of those lingering thoughts in your mind that often go unspoken, due to the fact that if verbalized, may produce evidence of insanity. This sense of vulnerability is quite refreshing and adds a twist to the mixture of folk, pop, rock and country genres presented in songs such as "Sailor's Mouth" and "Rope." As you discover the uniqueness presented in this album, you will receive a mouthful of sounds and topics that will cause you to thirst after Farewell Flight's *Out For Blood*.

[MONO VS. STEREO] JOANNA LUGO

WE CAME AS ROMANS

UNDERSTANDING WHAT WE'VE GROWN TO BE With *We Came As Romans* set to release their latest album, *Understanding What We've Grown To Be*, a lot is to be said other than the album. *UWWGTB* is a mouthful to say, but is a lot easier on the ears than it is on the mouth. With clean and crisp drums, precise riffs, hints of synthesizers and a great blend of screaming and singing, the album shows how the band has grown. If what the band is trying to say is that they have grown into their style, have become whole as a band, and lyrically and musically are balanced, I would not disagree with them for a second. The album has complements from *To Plant a Seed*, and with extra doses of hardcore the band has let the seed grow and are now beginning to blossom.

[EQUAL VISION] TONY D. BRYANT

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Thrice <i>Major/Minor</i>	04	05
The Devil Wears Prada <i>Dead Throne</i>	04	03
MUTEMATH <i>Odd Soul</i>	04*	
Switchfoot <i>Vice Verses</i>	04	04
Farewell Flight <i>Out For Blood</i>	04*	04
We Came As Romans <i>Understanding What We've Grown To Be</i>	03*	04
Stand Your Ground <i>Dependenseas</i>	03	04
Hands <i>Give Me Rest</i>	04	04
Dynasty <i>Truer Living With A Youthful Vengeance</i>	03*	04
Creations <i>The Gospel</i>	02*	02*
Ark of the Covenant <i>Separation</i>	03*	03*
Alice Cooper <i>Welcome 2 My Nightmare</i>	03*	03
Behold the Kingdom <i>The Eyes of the Wicked Will Fail</i>	03*	04
Gungor <i>Ghosts Upon The Earth</i>	04	04
Red Jumpsuit Apparatus <i>Am I The Enemy</i>	04	03

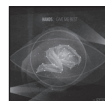


STAND YOUR GROUND

DESPONDENSEAS

Stand Your Ground has chosen to blend heavy and unflinching melodies with softer and more melodious songs in their newest release, *Despondenseas*. Tracks like the piano-driven "A Sudden Breath" and the mellow "Dispatch" change up the pace of the album but still glide smoothly from track to track. It's definitely a must-listen for those looking for an album with a little change in pace.

[RITE OF PASSAGE] BRITTANY MCNEAL



HANDS

GIVE ME REST

Give Me Rest is Fargo's Hands' second release on Facedown Records. This is one of the most dynamic records Hands have ever put out. We're talking: recording guitars with ten mics; while the intro was recorded with four drum sets. These wonder boys have done it again. Making yet another great record. This time mixing the slugginess of Neurois, the sweetness of Thrice and As Cities Burn. You can tell that these guys have matured musically and lyrically on this record. Even showing some love for the dad life Shane talks about his daughter in the last track and title to the record "Give Me Rest." This may end up in my top five records of the year – for sure the top 10.

[FACEDOWN] ROB SHAMELESS

DYNASTY

TRUER LIVING WITH A YOUTHFUL VENGEANCE

By melding punk-like drum schemes with heavy guitar riffs in their newest album, *Truer Living With A Youthful Vengeance*, Dynasty has created an unrelenting aggressiveness and an uncompromising drive behind each song that make this album an interesting listen, especially for fans of Christian hardcore. Aside from its tough exterior the album has thoughtful lyrics that provide an attention-grabbing full effect.

[STRIKE FIRST] BRITTANY MCNEAL



CREATIONS

THE GOSPEL

Creations breaks down the breakdowns with their sophomore release, *The Gospel*. Creations packs heavy spiritual lyrics and heavy chugs to get your ears perked. Unfortunately, the band doesn't bring much new to the scene. It's tons and tons of breakdowns and quick riffs, but nothing that really differs from typical tough hardcore. The vocals are tolerable, but not great. Creations has a powerful message that will most likely get kids who are new in the scene jumping up and down and throwing down, but for people who have been listening to hardcore for years, this is nothing new. [RITE OF PASSAGE] NICK COTRUFO (TMH)



ARK OF THE COVENANT

SEPARATION

"Be called- infectious." I assumed this was the opening line of the "Locusts Look like Horses" song on Ark of the Covenant's EP, *Separation*. Even though I was mistaken, all the lyrics throughout the album are still as raw, heart-gripping, and glorifying as I believed it was. Ark of the Covenant brings worship back to metal with low growls and high pig squeals. This fast-paced EP will have you finding yourself beginning to shrug your shoulders and stomp your feet in preparation for a good ol' mosh. Ark of the Covenant calls for listeners to rethink their complacency in their spiritual life by slapping you in the face, asking questions like, "What did you do for my name sake, tell me." The album kicks off with an introduction song, which blends right into hard-hitting metal with eloquent breakdowns and then ends with a worship-sung song. After completing the album, you'll find yourself itching for more of the hard, heart-pumping beats and metal-core drumming.

[STRIKE FIRST] ALEXANDRA LEONARDO



ALICE COOPER

WELCOME 2 MY NIGHTMARE

It can't be easy being Alice Cooper these days. He's an outspoken Christian, yet he's built his musical career upon horror movie theatrics. Aligning these two seemingly opposing factors is no simple task. Cooper is not afraid of revisiting his past, however, as *Welcome 2 My Nightmare* reunites the scary singer with producer Bob Ezrin, who also produced the original *Welcome to My Nightmare*. *Welcome to My Nightmare* (from 1975) was one of Cooper's most memorable album outings. Any rock record that featured Vincent Price ("The Black Widow") will not be forgotten soon. However, Cooper surprisingly duets with Ke\$ha on the mean-spirited "What Baby Wants," which is a star power turn that works a whole lot better on the new album than you might expect. Cooper is also in fine vocal form throughout. While annoying Auto-Tune nearly spoils the spiritual ballad "I Am Made of You," the man perfectly fits the role of circus ringmaster during the *Twilight Zone*-esque "Last Man on Earth" and then chills to the bone with the domestic violence nightmare "When Hell Comes Home." As a concept album, *Welcome 2 My Nightmare* doesn't quite make the grade. Cooper's an excellent storyteller, but it's awfully hard to find and follow any story here. What he lacks in cohesive conceptualization, though, Cooper more than makes up for with fiery singing and memorable songs. When Cooper performs "The Nightmare Returns," with its *The Exorcist*-esque theme keyboard line, there is no doubt that Alice still has a lot of cool creepy left in him. [UNIVERSAL MUSIC ENT.] DAN MACINTOSH



BEHOLD THE KINGDOM

THE EYES OF THE WICKED WILL FAIL

Behold The Kingdom is one of those bands that I thought from just telling me what they sounded like by genre I would hate it. Surprisingly, I was proven wrong. From the first listen of "Restoration," I was impressed. The song was a mix of Living Sacrifice meets The Famine. Seeing how one of those bands broke up this year and the other has no need to put out a record till next year, Behold The Kingdom will fill the void for Christian metal fans that are not fans of the new cookie-cutter metal out these days. This is a great record. I hope these guys blow up. They are a band that should not be overlooked. [ROTTWEILER] ROB SHAMELESS



GUNGOR

GHOSTS UPON THE EARTH

Even amidst the number of "name" artists in the worship genre, no artist sparks the imagination of the church quite like Gungor. The Colorado-based collective continues to invent, explore and subvert the musical spectrum while maintaining an accessibility, and the results on albums like *Beautiful Things* are, well, beautiful. *Ghosts Upon The Earth* is the latest release, and it only enhances what Michael Gungor and company have accomplished until now. "Let There Be" packs a compelling creation narrative inside an emotional wallop that might be their strongest track to date. "Crag and Clay" is more grounded but no less impressive, while the Anathallo nod on "This Is Not The End" is pitch perfect. Another brilliant step for Gungor. [BRASH] MATT CONNER



RED JUMPSUIT APPARATUS

AM I THE ENEMY

For at least one more album, Red Jumpsuit Apparatus fans get to hear the searing rock riffs of guitar tandem Matt Carter and Duke Kitchens. After recording *Am I The Enemy*, the duo left the quintet for personal reasons, but fans will still enjoy this energetic 12-song set. "Reap" is the lead single, and its straight scriptural approach works well with its undeniable intensity. "Salvation" features the great harmonies RJA reaches on every album, while "Dreams" lends a Muse-esque feel to the proceedings. From beginning to end, the third full-length from RJA feels like their most complete to date. Whether or not they'll sustain the momentum with their new line-up remains to be seen, but the short term looks bright.

[COLLECTIVE SOUND] MATT CONNER



SEVENTH DAY SLUMBER

THE ANTHEM OF ANGELS

Joseph Rojas, the front man for Seventh Day Slumber, sings about believing in miracles during "Wasted Life." And with the life Rojas has led, which has included enough near-death drama to fill a network TV season, he knows what he's talking about. This honesty and vulnerability is the key to Seventh Day Slumber's success. Even after all God has done for Rojas, the man still worries about being one mistake away from God abandoning him during "One Mistake." Although Scripture tells us there's no condemnation in Christ, Rojas sings about continually condemning himself during "Addicted to My Pain." You'd think by studio album number eight, Rojas would be happy and content. However, the truth of the matter is that Christianity is a constant battle, with the enemy relentlessly trying to bring believers down. Rojas succeeds here at making everyone feel a little less alone in the battle. If that's you too, you'll gladly sing along with *The Anthem of Angels*. **[BEC] DAN MACINTOSH**



MANIC DRIVE

EPIC

Manic Drive is one Christian act that truly 'gets' the whole modern pop production thing. In other words, much of *Epic* sounds like it would fit on most top-40 radio stations. Although "Halo" is more than a little cheesy, and this album's title track is calculated in a Black Eyed Peas kind of way, it's still impossible not to react warmly to this group's music. Sure, "Good Times" reaches right for the nostalgia nerve. But darn if it doesn't feel good getting Weezer "Buddy Holly" video all over it! These songs are tricked out to the max in studio gimmickry, but they will leave you with a guilty pleasure smile – like after a winning special effects-laden summer movie. If modern pop radio is too dark for the kids, and Disney Radio too dumb, give the youngsters Manic Drive. Moms and dads will like it, too. **[WHIPLASH] DAN MACINTOSH**



LEELAND

THE GREAT AWAKENING

It's a simple truth that no one can see God's love without looking for it. Leeland, though, is sincerely God-focused throughout *The Great Awakening* – particularly during "I Can See Your Love." Leeland even sings about seeing God's blessings in some of the most unlikely places, such as the faces of the poor. This unique song even quotes the hymn, "The Love of God" in such a subtle way, you may not even recognize it. Three of these song titles begin with the word "I," which highlights just how personal these songs are. During the quiet "I Wonder," Mooring confesses, "On my face I fall under Your heavy grace." He also admits, "I feel as though there is not enough praise inside of me." It's a wonderful, vulnerable worship song. Upping the vulnerability ante, however, Mooring later asks on "I Cry," "I cry, 'Are You here tonight?'" No worries, Mooring, God's here in every note. **[ESSENTIAL] DAN MACINTOSH**



7EVENTH TIME DOWN

ALIVE IN YOU

BEC's latest signing, 7eventh Time Down, plays it close to the label's rock vest, so it's no surprise to see the Kentucky radio rock quartet on the same label as Jeremy Camp, Seventh Day Slumber and Kutless. *Alive In You* follows the Nickelback standard to the letter, so fans of the aforementioned will enjoy the title track, the acoustic "Get Me To You" and the emotional "World Changer." **[BEC] MATT CONNER**



DOWNHERE

ON THE ALTAR OF LOVE

In many ways, Downhere goes against the grain with *On the Altar of Love*. The song "Living the Dream" suggests "choosing joy, whatever the weather." In the 'worldly' sense of the term, 'living the dream' means getting exactly what you want out of life. This is not so with people of faith sometimes, though. Just ask the Apostle Paul. On "For the Heartbreak," Downhere sing a praise song that thanks God for the trials in life. What? Yep. There are many thought-provoking moments sprinkled throughout this work, such as the lines, "How can I say I know You / When what I know is so small?" during "Let Me Rediscover You." This album's title song is a bit of a country fiddle song, while "Living the Dream" swings and shows off the work's variety. With *The Alter of Love*, Downhere are living the dream of turning faith into surprising art. **[CENTRICITY] DAN MACINTOSH**



OH, SLEEPER

CHILDREN OF FIRE

Oh, Sleeper plays its style of metal with an industrial music-like precision. Shane Blay's lead guitar lines have a fascinating, keyboard-esque feel to them, which fill tracks like "Claws Of God" with an almost techno vibe. Elsewhere, "Dealers of Fame" has a musical bridge that could very well pass for a progressive rock passage. *Children of Fire* is a battle cry of an album, in the midst of war. They sing, "We are a lighthouse shining" during "In the Wake of Pigs," only to add later "the battle has been won." Yet even in victory, this music still sounds a whole lot like war. Just to prove that metalcore bands know how to be pretty when they want to be, however, "Means to Believe" is a lovely, acoustic guitar driven ballad. Although this song sounds pretty, its lyric is nevertheless filled with a lot of violence and pain. At one point, Blay notes, "Lions always kill the lambs / Don't you see the irony?" There is a lot of musical intelligence coming through on *Children of Fire*. As metal music continues to evolve, driven by bands like Oh, Sleeper, attentive listeners become the true beneficiaries. 'Fusion' may be a pejorative term for some. However, Oh, Sleeper shows that mixing and matching diverse styles can, indeed, be a beautiful thing. **[SOLID STATE] DAN MACINTOSH**



ASHES REMAIN

WHAT I'VE BECOME

Ashes Remain have appropriately titled their album *What I've Become*, because this collection of songs chronicles a spiritual journey. During "Unbroken," for example, they speak of how it feels to be "lost in a broken generation." Nearly every one of these songs speaks about and to God from a believer's perspective. One rare exception is "Right Here," a song that talks of God's constant care. "Change My Life" is this album's most encouraging song. "If you could make the sun burn through the night / And you could make dead man come alive / If you could make the oceans all run dry / Then I know you can change my life." Ashes Remain perform these songs with powerful, bass heavy grooves and gruff vocals. This album's best musical moment arrives on "Take It Away," which features some fantastic lead guitar work. Ashes Remain is recommended for fans of bands like Kutless, because they make music that is heavy, but never harsh. **[FAIR TRADE] DAN MACINTOSH**

Ratings

	DV	Writer
Seventh Day Slumber <i>The Anthem of Angels</i>	03	03
Manic Drive <i>Epic</i>	03	03
Leeland <i>The Great Awakening</i>	03*	03
7eventh Time Down <i>Alive in You</i>	02*	02
Downhere <i>On the Altar of Love</i>	03*	04
Oh, Sleeper <i>Children of Fire</i>	04	04
Ashes Remain <i>What I've Become</i>	03	03
Haste The Day <i>Haste the Day vs. Haste the Day</i>	03*	
Mat Kearney <i>Young Love</i>	04	
Various Artists <i>Pigs in a Blanket</i>	02*	
Saviour Machine <i>1990 Demo & Legend III</i>	02*	
Samestate <i>S/T</i>	03	03
Blessthefall <i>Awakening</i>	03*	03
A Hill To Die Upon <i>Omens</i>	04	03*
Deas Vail <i>S/T</i>	03*	04
Family Force 5 <i>III</i>	03*	03*
Close Your Eyes <i>Empty Hands and Heavy Hearts</i>	04*	03*

HASTE THE DAY

HASTE THE DAY VS. HASTE THE DAY

Someone was smart to record one of the show's from this illustrious band's final tour last year. Releasing both an audio-only (CD) and an audio/video combo (DVD) was an even better idea. It would have been awesome to pull out all the stops and include mega production for this, but that wasn't really the band's straight-up play-n-sing style, so what you get is raw, tight, gnarly and fast. Shot with multiple cameras in a more-than-adequate large club venue, viewing gives you the impression that you're there – especially since the audio punches so hard (a great mix that makes up for the dim lighting). [SOLID STATE] DOUG VAN PELT

MAT KEARNEY

YOUNG LOVE

This gifted songsmith is blessed with a fine voice that could read the phone book and please these ears. The fact that he creates believable and relatable phrases and stories to connect each chorus is a bonus. *Young Love* is more upbeat than his previous two albums, giving his covershot homage to Jazz beatpoets some audible credence. [UNIVERSAL REPUBLIC] DOUG VAN PELT

VARIOUS ARTISTS

PIGS IN A BLANKET

Tribute albums usually make fans of the band really happy or they introduce the band's (often reinvented) songs to a whole new audience. This one has its reinventive/highly creative moments (The Migraines, Crimson Thorn, Frosthadr), but by and large these 20-something tracks are like fun cover tunes. [PIC] DOUG VAN PELT

SAVIOUR MACHINE

1990 DEMO & LEGEND III:II

Seeing how both of these separate releases are basically remixed demos, we thought we'd review 'em both in one fell swoop. The first is a glimpse of the recorded beginnings of this esoteric, progressive gothic band ... and the other shows a blemished glimpse of the end of their recorded output (at present, at least). "The Revelation" 5-song suite is on this rare, early demo. This unfinished masters of the capstone of the *Legend* series was apparently "lifted" from the band and hastily mixed, mastered and released without the band's permission. Talk about drama! While close inspection will show what's missing (massive orchestral parts, strings, etc), it's still a treat to get the rough ideas and melodies from this unfinished finale. Not the greatest way to finish a career, but not the piece of garbage some are labeling it, either. It's a bootleg! If you're a fan, get ahold of it. If not, please don't begin your discovery of SM here! [RETROACTIVE & MASSACRE] DOUG VAN PELT



SAMESTATE

S/T EP

It's no surprise that producers Paul Moak (Seabird) and Brandon Paddock (Leeland) are involved in Samestate's debut EP, since they're regularly attached to bands with whipsmart melodies. That said, Samestate should also become the next feather in their production caps with the obvious upward trajectory they're on. Fans of Starfield, Seabird and Leeland should love Samestate from the outset. Lyrically, the material sticks close to Switchfoot's *Learning to Breathe* album, although musically speaking, the album is much more straightforward alt-rock. "Hurricane" is arena- and radio-ready, but "Shadows" is the EP's winner with an immediate sing-along quality that fans will instantly remember at live shows. [SPARROW] MATT CONNER



BLESSTHEFALL

AWAKENINGS

Blessthefall's *Awakenings* is a bold, confident statement. The progressive metal that accompanies these spiritually-tinged lyrical statements also reveals the same confidence. Producer Michael Baskette has done an excellent job in bringing aural clarity to Blessthefall's vision. The way Baskette gives Blessthefall that far away sonic sound in the middle of "I'm Bad News, In the Best Way" is both innovative and effective. This album is the second release to feature new vocalist Beau Bokan, and he certainly sounds comfortable in his new role. Original drummer Matt Traynor also shines on this album, particularly during "40 Days..." where his speedy playing drives up the energy level. Blessthefall has certainly been through its fair share of personnel changes during its relatively young life. However, there's freshness and a newfound sense of purpose running through *Awakenings*. Awakenings can occur at many junctures during a group's career. Blessthefall is clearly having one of these visionary moments with *Awakenings*. [FEARLESS] DAN MACINTOSH



A HILL TO DIE UPON

OMENS

"I am the black space between the stars, I am the darkness that can be felt." It is this kind of writing that made us rave about A Hill to Die Upon's debut, calling them the best new extreme metal band out there, because clearly they are delivering everything dark and heavy we love about metal. So now we come to the much awaited sequel. Did they do it? Did this death/black metal hybrid, corpse painted Midwest band surpass album #1? The answer, I have to say, is no. This is a brilliant album and there is much to love about it, but the doomy feel this time around seems to dull the brilliance sometimes, making *Omens* a point below *Infinite*. That said, they are the best band doing this style today. Shades of my all time favorite death metal band Bolt Thrower, as well as the holy black assault on our ancient enemy in "Satan, Your Kingdom Must Come Down" counterpoint the beauty shown in "Nehushtan" and the sleeper track. Pick this up! [BOMBWORKS] CHRIS CATTO



DEAS VAIL

S/T

The only knock against the latest Deas Vail album is that its release date is a head-scratcher. With an autumnal entrance, its infectious innocence might get lost in its environment. Nevertheless, there's no denying the sweet summery constructs of "Sixteen" or "Summer Forgets Me." Regardless of the season, Deas Vail buoys the mood. But the band's self-titled isn't a one-mood wonder. Instead, "Towers" cranks up the intensity with a stellar brooding bass line that anchors Wes and Laura Blaylock's harmonies. "Quiet Like Sirens" conjures The Stills with its guitar tones and eventual build and is possibly the album's sleeper hit. Deas Vail realizes the potential heard on *Collapse* and makes them essential listening. [MONOVS-STEREO] MATT CONNER



FAMILY FORCE 5

III

Hey, counting their remix album and Christmas tunes, shouldn't this be IV&1/2 or V? Either way, the crunk rocking siblings return with their most fully realized musical statement. FF5 suffuse their already heady mix of hip-hop and punky metal with hard industrial danceyness (think late '80s Wax Trax! Records), electronic r&b and believe-it-or-not a downtempo number that may be their Disciple-esque attempt to court softer Christian radio formats that wouldn't otherwise touch their music with the proverbial ten-foot antenna. Lyrically? Uh, that's another thang. Their handling of recessionary economics, "Paycheck," sounds to be coming from about as honest a place as Ronnie Dunn's country hit "Cost of Living." So, that's good. The guys' refashioning of a dance popular in Southern soul music circles, "Wobble," makes for fun that will go down well at both their church-affiliated and club gigs, though the Far East Movement-influenced neo-bass music of "Tank Top" could give them an even bigger dancefloor banger. Then, however, there's "Mamaccita," wherein the reference of a gal possessing a "J-Lo" has likely less to do with an affinity for making middling dance pop than, a certain physical asset of Ms. Lopez' that I don't think King Solomon broached in the Song of Songs. That kind of misstep – of which that's not the only instance – characterizes a certain flippancy that won't endear them to some who might otherwise groove to the Fam's sonic inventiveness. Alas. [TOOTH & NAIL] JAMIE LEE RAKE



CLOSE YOUR EYES

EMPTY HANDS AND HEAVY HEARTS

This is most certainly a head banging album with driving rhythms, abrupt vocals and chorus-like anthems. Everything about this series of brutal serenades screams truth and confidence, allowing the listener to fully engage with body, mind and soul. Throughout the album these men use a combination of screaming, singing and yelling to provide eclectic vocals, while still maintaining punk and hardcore influences throughout the instrumentation. Songs such as "Empty Hands" and "Wormwood" refresh the ears with topics of doubt and everyday life; an overall sense of honesty. This album reinforces the fact that Close Your Eyes needs to continue making music. [VICTORY] JOANNA LUGO

The Christian & Art

WITH KEMPER CRABB

The Disconnect: Why Evangelicals Make Bad Art (Part the Twenty-Eighth)

In the past twenty-seven issues, we have essayed to assay the reasons that Evangelical Americans, who reportedly comprise betwixt one-fifth and one-fourth of our population, have produced so few examples of quality art of any sort. We have divined that this paucity of works of art is largely due to limited (and/or distorted) views of Biblical teaching (or a failure to act on the implications of its teaching), despite the fact that artistry is unquestionably one of “every good work” in which Scripture is to instruct Christians (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

We saw the negative effects of sub-Biblical beliefs on the doctrines of Creation and Eschatology, which result in denigrations of the physical world and time as appropriate theaters of God’s Purposes, encouraging pessimism concerning history, and of seeing the world as Satan’s domain, which needs only to be escaped from, rather than redeemed and fulfilled.

We also saw that deficient perspectives on the doctrine of the Holy Trinity lead to a destruction of Scriptural justification of symbols as simultaneously revealing both multiple and unified meanings. Deficient Trinitarian views lead as well to seeing men not as mysterious bearers of God’s Image, but as simplistic machines manipulable by quick-fix formulae.

We turned then to a consideration of the implications of Christ’s Incarnation, in which God, in the Second Person of the Trinity, joined Himself to a fully Human Nature and Body, in order to be the Perfect Sacrifice to atone for fallen mankind’s sin by dying in their place. As summed up by the Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451), the Incarnation is realized in Christ Jesus since He is “at once complete in Godhead and complete in Manhood, truly God and truly Man...”

In the last issue, we saw that, as One Who was Fully Human as well as Fully Divine, He possessed Senses (as well as Emotions), which demonstrate the reality that human senses are valid vehicles for spirituality, as well as a necessary and intended part of being humans created in God’s Image.

A related truth is that the Lord Jesus, as a Human, also possessed an Imagination (as do all humans). Much of the Evangelical Church, inheriting the dualism of its Pietism, views the imagination with suspicion, seeing it as the origin of the projection of

an interpretive gloss, a kind of “lie” onto the world. Yet Jesus constantly exercised His Imagination in the Gospels.

For instance, Jesus regularly applied metaphors to Himself, describing Himself as “the Door” (John 10:7) (though He was not a slab of wood, stone, or metal on hinges), and “the Way” (John 14:6) (though He was not a dirt, gravel, or paved walk-way), and “the Good Shepherd” (John 10:4) (though He was not a sheepherder, but a Carpenter...). Jesus was (literally speaking) none of these things, though He was all these things, metaphorically speaking.

He is the “Way” to God, since He Alone can reconcile men to the Father. He is, thus, a “Door” into a state of forgiveness and salvation. He does care for, protect, and lead into safety His People, just as a shepherd does his flock. However, since Jesus was not literally a door, way, or shepherd, He imaginatively (and accurately) applied these metaphors to Himself to teach us Who and What He is via our imaginations, as we draw comparisons between Jesus’ Purposes and what those metaphors indicate.

The Lord Jesus also utilized imagination when He answered His enemies (Matt. 22) or taught about the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt. 25: 1-13), as He told Parables, stories which didn’t directly answer questions or teach in a discursive way, but which answered or taught by requiring the hearer to imaginatively envision himself as being a character in the Parable (or imagining the circumstances of the Parable in his own life), and drawing conclusions from that imaginative exercise, an exercise which Jesus had to imaginatively envision in the first place.

Jesus’ Exercise of His Imagination shows us definitively that, although fallen men can and do misuse that function, it can and should be used as a holy and normal part of being human. To reject our imagination (the foundation of all the Arts) is to reject a vital part of God’s Image in humanity, and to bring our artistic endeavors into ruin.

[kempercabb.net]

Devotions with Greg Tucker

"I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."
—Matthew 16:18

Since misery loves company, anyone who's like me would enjoy standing next to the Apostle Peter. He's the patron saint of Christians-who-are-definitely-under-construction. In other words, Peter is one of us.

Jesus asked, "Who do you say I am?" in Matthew 16, and Peter declared, "Obviously you're the Messiah." But when the Lord followed with, "You're right, and I'm going to die because of that," the same man responded defiantly, "Absolutely not!" In one breath he acknowledges Jesus as the all-wise Son of God, but in the next adds, "You don't know what you're doing." He's illogical.

That sounds like me.

When Jesus sat to wash the disciples' feet in John 13, Peter blurted out, "You're not going to wash my feet." But when it's explained, "If I don't, you won't have any part of me," Peter jumps to the other extreme and says, "Then give me a bath all over." He overreacts.

That's familiar, too.

How about the time Peter is fishing on a boat with friends? His shirt is off in the hot morning sun, but discovering Jesus on the shore, John 21:7 says Peter jumped in to swim toward him, ...after getting dressed. (Incidentally, the boat arrived just a few moments later.) Peter makes foolish choices.

Yep, definitely me.

Or consider when Peter found himself in the presence of two of his all-time heroes, Moses and Elijah. Scripture says he was speechless with awe. Yet, a paraphrase of Mark 9:5-6 could go like this: "Peter, not knowing what to say, said...." As someone who's always talked too much, the man gives in to a bad habit once again.

Does all of this sound like you? Peter had so many flaws, so many failures, so many weaknesses, yet at their very first meeting God's Son looked at him and said, "You, sir, shall be called 'Rock.'"

From the beginning Jesus saw the best in Peter, and he sees the best in you. The Bible doesn't give the title saint to impressive men and women who have long-since died. No, anyone who loves God is considered a saint. From day one. That makes me St. Gregory. My wife is St. Penny. It means you're a saint, too, if you're a follower of Christ. Even if you're still under construction.

Greg Tucker is president of Tucker Signature Films in Beverly Hills, and pastor of Hope Community Church of Anaheim. You can hear him online at HopeSermons.com

WHERE IT ALL BEGINS

"...The Son is the image of the invisible God, the Firstborn over all creation. For in Him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, ...all things have been created through Him and for Him..." (Colossians 1:15, 16)

"Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it." (John 1: 3-5)

Sadly, we all live in a world constantly seeking our affections and attentions. Sometimes I find myself trapped in a sea of empty promises. Sold to me through the media, the radio, the internet, the television, the billboards, my email inbox... who am I kidding? Was I really made for these vain though sometimes charming promises presented to me every moment of every day?

One of my favorite prayers from my Anglo-Catholic upbringing that still resonates with me today is a part of the Eucharist prayer. On most Sunday's I find myself kneeling as we pray together...

"Holy and gracious Father: In your infinite love you made each of us for yourself..."

A great reminder that Christianity is not only for when we depart this broken world, but our faith in Jesus Christ is for each moment that we live on this earth. We were made by Him and for Him.

—Michael Pritzl

PICK OF THE LITTER



Bayless

Bayless is a band on the rise from Wichita, KS. After Bible school in Nebraska, the band's namesake Jared Bayless put together his band. Opening for acts like TFK, Mikeschair, Chasen and Building 429, Bayless developed chops to melt your face live. In the near future, look for Bayless to be featured on hip-hop records from Cole DeRuse out of Kansas City and Wilchild from South Carolina. For an Evanescence-Skillet blend of rock and roll, check 'em out. (Jonathan Harms)

baylessband.com

☆ Every Knee Shall Bow

The intense black metal this band puts out is awesome. The added intrigue of their lead guitarist being only 12 years old is just a bonus attraction. Technical. Fast. Brutal. (Doug Van Pelt)

facebook.com/everykneeshallbow

☆ Cast A Fire

Heavy, melodic, gothic and doomy metal with rock solid and tight playing throughout. The high-quality packaging on *These Troubled Waters* album matches the audio inside. (DV)

castafire.com

SoSaveMe

Melodic rock from Michigan. New album coming out in October. (DV)

myspace.com/sosaveme

Fight The Fade

Tight, hard and bold. The "Lies" intro is like the metalcore soundtrack to a Christian haunted house. Great melodic lead vocals. (DV)

fightthefade.com

Light Up The Darkness

Super tight musicianship supports some catchy sing/screaming vocal trade-offs between guys and girl. RIYL The Letter Black. (DV)

myspace.com/lightupthedarknessband

Loaner

Nice hooks and heavy, dirty tones add spice to this progressive pop punk hybrid mix with similarities to MxPx. (DV)

loanerrock.com

Campbell the Band

Lots of instruments, multiple textures and layered voices make this creative band so fun to listen to and watch. (DV)

campbelltheband.net

Fools For Rowan

Nice vocals adorn this sexy, soulful blues and country rock. (DV)

foolsforrowan.com

Tetrarch

This Atlanta-based band delivers the intense, urgent riffage like early Metallica and Megadeth. (DV)

myspace.com/tetrarchlive

Outside The Camp

Good sonics, melodies and songs. The BGV's shine in "I Built This Ship, Now Watch It Sink," the band's best moment on their 3-song EP. The added texture of the bells is nice. (DV)

facebook.com/outsidethecamp

☆ The Overseer

Well-produced and channeled energy that explodes with hardcore screams/shouts and tough-yet-melodic vocals. (DV)

myspace.com/theoverseermusic

Memphibians

If you like the beautiful chaos that is Danielson, you should give a listen to this group. (DV)

myspace.com/thememphibians

The Brigade

Their new 10-song disc is evidence that Austin's own metalcore monsters are continuing to grow into their own identity of brutality and thought. (DV)

reverbnation.com/thebrigadetxt

☆ The Magic Book

Who knew a member from Still Remains (Zach Roth) would go on to create some great electronic pop/rock? Great whispery vocals & songs. (DV)

myspace.com/themagicbook

For The Broken

Punchy drums & the right amount of open chord "breathing" aimed straight for the heart of dirty modern metal à la Red, Disturbed, Godsmack. (DV)

forthebroken.net

Insomniac Folklore

Primo esoteric indie rock with lots of worshipful moments & surprises. (DV)

insomniacfolklore.com

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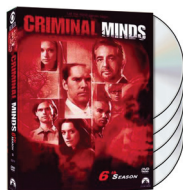
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CRIMINAL MINDS | SEASON 6

Epitomizing the greatest benefit of having instant access to an entire season, it's hard not to keep watching each of these 24 episodes in one sitting. This show does a masterful job of juxtaposing the sickest, most twisted criminals out there with the noble attributes of loyalty, love and teamwork portrayed by these 8 members of the FBI's

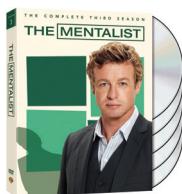
Behavioral Analysis Unit. I especially love the Penelope Garcia character, whose extreme eccentric personality bears an uncanny resemblance to the IT girl in *NCIS* (Abby). (Paramount) DV

[Cuss: 8 | Gore: 4 | Sex: 0.6 | Spiritual Conversations: 70]

THE MENTALIST | SEASON 3

An exciting season that avoided the token boring episode. The character love grew exponentially this season, due to peeling back layers of Jane's, Van Pelt's and Lisbon's personalities (and their past), as well as a teasingly small amount on that bad guy "Red John." The profiler special feature on RJ was fascinating. (Warner Bros.) Rachel Van Pelt

[Cuss: 3 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 50]



THE GRACE CARD

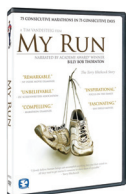
Stories of struggle, racism, bitterness pulls the viewer in for reconciliation. Wrap it around cops, crime, fatherhood and Louis Gossett, Jr. handing out wisdom makes it some fairly compelling viewing, only interrupted by an occasional weak moment of acting by the supporting cast (like that racist grandma with a bat). (Sony Pictures) DV

[Cuss: 0 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]

SON OF MORNING

Phillip Katz (Joseph Cross) gets thrust into the role of messiah for a world fearful of its end. The results are predictable and humorous (not as funny as *Life of Brian*), with a few quotable lines: "I was at the church praying for that sun thing – or against it..." "You're going to become a nationwide phenomenon, bigger than Je... bigger than the Beatles!" and "More talking gerbil!" (eOne) DV

[Cuss: 22 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 4.1 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



MY RUN

This modern day Forrest Gump, Terry Hitchcock, decided to run from Minnesota to Georgia after losing his wife to cancer and raising his kids alone for a few years. Out of shape and inexperienced, Hitchcock couldn't be deterred from his vision. This sometimes dry and slow-moving documentary tells the story of the impetus, pitfalls and culmination of this run for single parent awareness. (Virgil Films) DV

[Cuss: 1 | Gore: 0 | Sex: 0 | Spiritual Conversations: 100]



ORB AUDIO SYSTEM

There's something tough about the Orb audio system. From the sturdy construction to the speaker wire connections, you'll feel more like a musician wiring his cabinet for a gig. And talk about sound!

Wow. The subwoofer performs like Jabba the Hut looks – fat and massive. The little round speakers scream out the highs with clarity. With its Mini-T Amplifier you can give your mp3 player, TV, computer or other portable device the concert venue sonic treatment if you add-on the subwoofer. It doesn't come cheap, but it's seriously good. (orbaudio.com) Doug Van Pelt [Setup Ease: A | Performance: A+ | Price: \$598]

INTELLICASE IPAD 2 COVER

Appleheads will bicker, but Griffin has improved the cool Smart Cover so popular with iPad users. The magnetic open/close refresh/hybernate feature is awesome on both, but instead of just fitting on at the hinges, this one has a hard plastic shell on the back (with a groove to fit the folded cover that'll serve as a stand-up frame).

(griffintechology.com) DV [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: B+ | Price: \$59]



DOODLE CUSTOM SPEAKER

While portable mp3 players were originally invented with private listening in mind, sometimes you just wanna share your tunes with others or you want to listen headphone-free. This cloth-covered speaker is small, portable and capable of filling a small room full room with enough volume to hear (not rock out). So what? Right? Wrong. Add

your custom artwork to a soft speaker cover and you've got coolness. (origaudio.com) DV [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: \$39]

CEIVA PRO 80 CONNECTED FRAME

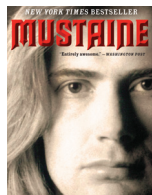
It's not just a digital photo frame. It's a social media center where you share photos with friends on your frames and their frames show your photos and ... you get the picture (get it?). It works via your wireless network (or dial-up if you're real old school), so it'll be using a tiny bit of your wireless bandwidth. It's kinda like Facebook for your digital frame. Contact editor@hmmag.com to join the "group" and we'll share band photos. (ceiva.com) DV [Setup Ease: C+ | Performance: B | Price: \$147]



POWER JOLT DUAL USB CHARGER

End the in-car fight for the phone/USB charger with this dual jack version. (griffintechology.com) DV [Setup Ease: A+ | Performance: A+ | Price: \$29]





MUSTAINE: A HEAVY METAL MEMOIR DAVE MUSTAINE WITH JOE LAYDEN

It's not as if Dave Mustaine had anything to lose in telling his story in print. He has led one of metal's most successful bands ever in Megadeth; having a formative hand in an act even higher on the genre's marquee, Metallica, cements his iconic status all the more. Beyond that, dude has mended a good many relational fences since becoming Christian ten years back. It's not his intention to raise anyone's dander in his autobiography, *Mustaine*, as he recounts his especially depraved true-life tales of sex, drugs and thrash metal ascendancy. Instead, his is a cautionary story, though one in which he admits to having some good times before his conversion and between the umpteen stints of rehab that preceded it. Considering the acerbic wit sometimes displayed in his lyrics, it's no surprise Mustaine has a sense of humor about his sinful misadventures and his transition to a saintlier life. Moreso, however, he comes off as a grateful survivor of his own dissolution and a (finally) humble warrior for his still-savage artistry. An extra chapter of updating Mustaine's rather peaceful life distinguishes this paperback edition from the hardcover issued last year. Distinguishing *Mustaine* from nigh any other autobio' of a believer is its ratio of not-ready-for-youth-group vocabulary. But, perhaps like a profanity-laden Lewis Black stand-up routine, the cussiness fairly enhances Mustaine's raconteuring. [It Books/Harper Collins] *Jamie Lee Rake*



DESERT HIGH | DOUG VAN PELT

The debut novel by the editor/publisher of the magazine you're now reading may establish a new genre: semi-autobiographical sports fantasy science fiction. With the help of experimental U.S. military time travel technology, Van Pelt seeks to right the circumstances that cost his high school football team a crucial game. Where pipe dreams end and Van Pelt's actual life story begins remains blurry (as perhaps it should to all but his family and closest friends), but he's generous with true details, such as the fact that he's actually the entrepreneur behind a Christocentric music magazine, the names of family members and even those of former employees. In that way, for some *Desert High* will be a fascinating read apart from its more fantastical elements. Though Van Pelt has had over a quarter-century's experience chronicling the makers of righteous rock, he's still a newbie to fiction. Witnessing him finding his footing as a fiction author is part of the book's charm, however, as is the integration of other real world details from the early '80s and the present. *Desert High* wasn't intended to be a "Christian" novel, but it might be something of a disappointment to some that Van Pelt's faith doesn't play a more prominent role in the narrative. That at one point he refers to himself as a "pretty religious guy" seems to give the subject flippant attention. Caveats such as that aside, *Desert High* has the potential to appeal to readers beyond those who know HM's founder from his day job and – as a great way to pay for the junior Van Pelts' college expenses – be optioned for a movie adaptation. The themes of athletics and sportsmanship will grab many, but *Desert High* shows Van Pelt's promise for further fiction writing. [HM Press] *Jamie Lee Rake*



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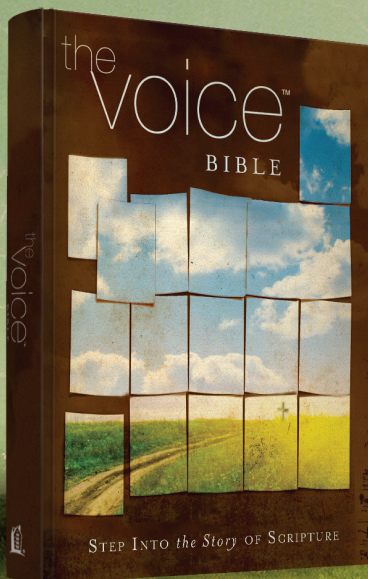
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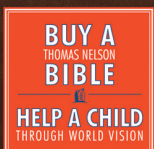
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